

Title:

Produce: The Roots of Good Health

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Summary:

We often skimp on eating root vegetables, either because they seem boring or we don't know how to best prepare them. Here's an overview that will inspire you to reach for the roots in the produce section of your grocery store.

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Article Body:

Even if we roll our eyes when we hear it, "Eat your veggies" is a maxim that we'd be well advised to heed. Our mothers and grandmothers instinctively knew that fresh fruit and vegetables were good for us, and science has reinforced the value of fresh produce in keeping our bodies in peak condition. Nevertheless, we often skimp on eating root vegetables, either because they seem boring or we don't know how to best prepare them. These nutrition-packed powerhouses are worth a second look, though. Here's an overview that will hopefully inspire you to reach for the roots when you're in the produce section of your grocery store.

Captivating Carrots

Oh, the ubiquitous carrot. Baby carrots are peeled, washed, and sealed in plastic bags for a no-fuss, no-muss snack. But carrots aren't given credit for their variety or versatility. For example, not all carrots are orange. The next time you want to experiment, be on the lookout for white, yellow, red, and even purple carrots. They can be used in recipes, or to add vibrant color to your plates.

Speaking of recipes, carrots can be more than an afterthought for a salad or to enrich and add flavor to broths. Carrots give breads, muffins, and cakes a wonderful moistness, texture, and flavor, and cold carrot soup can be a refreshing taste treat on a hot summer day. Throw grated carrots, cream cheese, and grated onion into a food processor and spread on toast points for a delicious appetizer. Step into the future with a carrot mousse or flashback to the past with pickled carrots. Let your imagination fly and you'll rediscover

these colorful treasures.

Radical Rutabagas and Tasty Turnips

Although the Finns and Swedes cook rutabagas with aplomb, the rutabaga and turnip aren't in most Americans repertoires when it comes to cooking vegetables. Sure, turnip greens are a staple of the delicious cuisine of the South, but what to do with the root?

Rutabagas are actually a cross between turnips and cabbages, although they are most often used like a turnip in cooking. Either rutabagas or turnips can be cooked and added to mashed potatoes to enhance their flavor and nutrition. Try turnip custard, or combine apples and rutabagas for a delicious baked casserole. Use rutabagas in a spice cake or bread, or make a seasoned puree and serve it with a meat dish.

Hearty Jicama

Like the carrot, the jicama is often relegated to the salad bar. But this sweet, starchy, and refreshing root vegetable is a wonderful addition to stir-fry or potato salad. Much of jicama's appeal is its unique crunchy texture, so grate it, cube it, or julienne it to add zazz to cold dishes. Toss jalapeno with vinegar, cilantro, and jalapeno, and then place grilled shrimp over a bed of jicama. Delectable!

Other Nutrition-Packed Roots

When visiting the fresh produce section of your grocery store, don't overlook other roots that have taken a back seat to other fresh fruit and vegetables. Beets, parsnips, and radishes also offer culinary delights, so embrace their versatility and their ability to get you excited about eating your veggies!