



Fresh Story: Carrots

Get to Know Your Fruits and Vegetables

Nature's Cheezies...

What's crunchy, sweet and looks like a stubby orange finger? And, you can eat them with your hands! Baby carrots – nature's cheezies!

Carrots are nutritional heroes - they store a goldmine of minerals and nutrients. In fact, the first carrots were grown for medicinal purposes. Carrots contain more of the organic compound beta-carotene than any other vegetable or fruit; that's why they're orange. Our bodies convert beta-carotene to vitamin A. Why do you need vitamin A? It helps your night vision. It's also good for our skin, helps our body fight cancer and gives us strong bones (especially important for growing bodies). So, it's true – eating your carrots will help you see in the dark!

How do farmers grow them so small?

Easy, they don't let them get big. Some baby carrots are just that, they're pulled out of the ground when they are still small - before they've developed a proper 'shoulder' (if you imagine the tops as hair, the 'shoulder' is the round part just below). Like all babies, these immature roots are sweeter and not as tough as the 'grown ups'.

Baby cut carrots, like the little gems you're snacking on started out as large carrots that were peeled, cut and rounded off using special machines. BC farmers grow special varieties of carrots to make their 'babies'. Sweet-Bites and Sugar Snacks are two varieties grown for their uniform shape, sweet taste and bright orange colour.

Do you sometimes see a white discolouration on peeled carrots?

That's called 'carrot blush' and it occurs when moisture is lost from the surface of the carrot through peeling giving it a white appearance. There's no harm in eating it and it usually goes away by rinsing the carrots with water.

Have you ever seen a purple carrot? How about white, yellow, red or black? Carrots were originally purple or red with a thin root. Orange carrots are fairly new arrivals to our plates.



Crunch and Chew!

Carrots have tough cell walls; that's what gives them their crunch. When you eat your carrots raw, it's important to chew them well to help break down those walls so that your body can get the healthy benefits of all the fibre.

Japanese word for carrot = 'ninjin'
1 x 20 cm 'grown up' carrot = 3 baby cut carrots
1 tsp = 2,000 carrot seeds

Dig in for snacks...

Carrots are called root vegetables. These are the starchy tubers and taproots that grow underground and provide the plant with nutrients. This is the part that we eat. Sometimes we eat the tops too – like turnip and beet greens. Some root vegetables, like onions, garlic and shallots are actually bulbs – but we still call them root veggies.

It's hard to believe that these funny shaped bumpy globes and cone-shaped wonders started out as tiny seeds. In the dark earth a seed sprouts and a root grows downward drawing in nutrients from the soil while at the same time a green top makes its way to the surface. The root gradually forms a long and thin shape or short and fat shape. Let it grow and soon the surface of the soil will crack open to reveal the root's 'shoulders'. Time for harvesting as hands (or a harvesting machine) grab hold of their leafy tops and yank them out. That's the magic of root vegetables. They're like buried treasures hiding in the earth, quietly growing in the ground waiting to be discovered – and eaten.

5.8 metres long =
World largest carrot
grown in 2007
(That's longer than
3 kids lined up
head to toe!)

Can you think of 3 other root vegetables?

1.
2.
3.

