

## Vegetable of the Month: Root Vegetables

### Parsnip

Parsnips look like a pale carrot and are actually a relative of the carrot, celeriac, and parsley root. Commonly found in Europe, this root vegetable arrived to the United States with the colonists. Popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries for its celery flavor and nutty fragrance, this vegetable was often used in recipes that called for caloric decadence. Serving size ½ cup, cooked (78g) Amount Per Serving: Calories 60 Calories from Fat 0

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation: Parsnips are available year round with a peak from fall into spring. They are often displayed with the parsley root, so be sure you know which is a parsnip. Parsley roots are typically sold with their feathery greens whereas parsnips are sold by the root. Select medium sized roots with uniform creamy beige skin. Avoid limp, pitted, or shriveled roots. Store parsnips unwashed wrapped in paper towel, placed in plastic, and store in the vegetable crisper of the refrigerator for about 2 weeks. Wash, peel, and trim parsnips as you would a carrot. If steaming, then the parsnips skins will slip off after cooking. If pureeing parsnips, then leave skins intact.

### Beets

Serving size ½ cup, cooked (85g) Amount Per Serving: Calories 35 Calories from Fat 0

Beets used to be only found in salad bars in canned form, and on European menus, but with the culinary winds changing, this root is now commonly seen in stateside grocery stores everywhere. This root vegetable like its turnip cousin has two parts — the edible root and the edible green leaves. There are too many varieties to list here, but with more than one type of beet to choose from, why not try one of each if you get the chance. This versatile vegetable can be eaten raw, baked, steamed, pickled, and served as a condiment or alongside soups and entrees.

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation: Beets are available year-round because they thrive in more than 30 states with June through October being their peak season. These roots come in all shapes, sizes, and colors so try a variety to find your favorite. Young beets, about an inch and a ½-inch diameter are fine textured, tender, and excellent in salads. Medium and large size beets are good for cooking; very large roots are too woody for eating regardless of cooking method. Which ever size of beets you choose, look for smooth, hard, uniformly round beets that are free of cuts and bruises. It's best to store beets that have their tops chopped off in individual plastic bags in the coolest part of the refrigerator. These should last up to one week. The greens should be eaten as soon as possible. Wash and scrub the beets before cooking. Beets peel best after cooking, so be sure to wear disposable gloves to minimize red stains on hands.

### Turnips

Serving size ½ cup, cooked (78g) Amount Per Serving: Calories 15 Calories from Fat 0

This root vegetable has been found all over Europe and Asia for centuries. A turnip looks larger than a radish and is a well known food source for both the root and greens. Turnips come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation: Turnips are available year round with a peak in the fall and winter months. Select smooth surfaced roots that are firm and heavy with some root hairs at the bottom. In general, the smaller the turnip, the sweeter the taste. Turnips keep well; cut the greens and bag them separately from the root placing them in the crisper section of the refrigerator for up to a week. Turnips can be peeled before cooking, eaten raw, or sliced, diced, or julienned. When cooking this delicate root, cook only to the just tender point; avoid overcooking as sweetness will diminish.

### Rutabaga

Serving size ½ cup, cooked (85g) Amount Per Serving: Calories 35 Calories from Fat 0

A cousin to the turnip, rutabagas are a cross between a cabbage and a turnip. Virtually unknown in the United States until the 19th century, this root gets its name from the Swedish word 'rotabagge' meaning round root. People have avoided this root because it is a cruciferous vegetable that becomes more flavored and odorous when cooked.

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation: Rutabagas are available year round with a peak in the fall and winter. These roots range from tan to violet in color and are much larger than turnips; choose smooth, heavy, and firm roots. Smaller rutabagas, 4" in diameter, tend to have sweeter flavor. This root stores for about 2 weeks in the refrigerator or at room temperature for a week. Rutabagas are usually covered in wax, so it's best to quarter the root, then peel the skin before cooking.

### Celery Root or Celeriac

Serving size ½ cup, cooked (78g) Amount Per Serving: Calories 20 Calories from Fat 0

Part of the celery family, the celery root or celeriac, is routinely used in French cooking and is seen throughout Europe. It is solely grown for its root use and appeared in the United States beginning in the 19th century. This root is bypassed by many because of its unusual appearance of crevices and rootlets. When cooked well, this root evokes celery and parsley flavors.

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation: Celery roots are available year-round with a peak during November through April. Select roots that are the least knobby or ones that have the smoothest skin (for easier peeling). Medium roots tend to be smoother and harder and these roots can be sold with or without the celery tops. If you do buy the roots with the tops, trim the stalks and save them for soups and stews. The roots should be wrapped in plastic, stored in the refrigerator, and used within a week. Celery roots must be scrubbed, trimmed at the top and bottom, quartered, and then peeled before eating. Be sure to discard any spongy parts. Avoid overcooking celery root as it will go quickly from firm to mushy.

### Horseradish

Serving size 1 tablespoon, raw. Amount Per Serving: Calories 10 Calories from Fat 0

Horseradish is a member of the mustard family and is native to Eastern Europe, although it may have originated in Asia, Germany, or the Mediterranean area. The ancient Greeks used it, so did the Hebrews — it is one of the 5 bitter herbs of the Jewish Passover. The strong flavor of this root has an underlying sweetness and seems more like garlic than a spice.

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation: Horseradish roots are available year round but are plentiful during the fall and early spring. Buy roots that are hard avoiding sprouting, greenish tinges, blemishes, and shriveling. Store these roots in plastic bags and refrigerate up to a week or freeze grated root in an airtight container for several months. Scrub the root and peel the brown skin. Finely grate or food process the root.

### Salsify

Serving size ½ cup (67g). Amount Per Serving: Calories 50 Calories from Fat 0

Salsify is called vegetable oyster because of its faint oyster-like flavor. This name is used interchangeably to describe two roots. White salsify is pale, thin, forked, has rootlets at the bottom, while black salsify (scorzoneria) looks like a brown carrot and is much smoother and longer looking. Popular in Europe since the 16th century, this root has just begun to make its appearance in markets.

Availability, Selection, Storage, and Preparation: This root is available from fall to early spring. Select medium size roots that are smooth and firm. Larger roots are more fibrous and smaller roots have less meat. White salsify is sold in bunches with leaves still attached. Black salsify is usually sold without leaves and in plastic bags. Salsify will last 2 weeks wrapped in plastic and stored in the refrigerator. Prepare salsify by scrubbing with a brush, removing the skin, rootlets, and all dark spots. Trim the tops and bottoms and slice as you would a carrot or leave whole. Avoid overcooking this root as it will quickly turn into mush.

## Recipes

### **Winter Root Vegetable Stew**

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

Source: Chef Stephen Pyles for Melissa's World Variety Produce

Ingredients

1½ Tbsp olive oil  
8 garlic cloves, chopped  
1 cup celery root, peeled and finely diced  
1 cup parsnips, peeled and finely diced  
1 cup rutabaga, peeled and finely diced  
1 small beet, peeled and finely diced  
½ cup red wine  
3 cups vegetable stock  
1 cup water  
1 tsp sage, dried  
1 tsp thyme, dried  
1 tsp oregano, dried  
1 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil until lightly smoking and add the garlic, onions, carrots, celery root, parsnips, rutabaga, beet, and turnip. Cook the vegetables over high heat, until they are slightly golden, about 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Deglaze the pan with the red wine and reduce the liquid by half. Add the stock, bring to a simmer, and cover the pan. Cook at a simmer, covered, for about 8 minutes, or until all the vegetables are tender; add more stock as necessary to keep the vegetables covered. Add the sage, thyme, oregano, and parsley. This stew can be made one day ahead and reheated.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 113, Protein 2g, Fat 4g, Percent Calories From Fat 29%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 16g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 387mg.

### **Celery Root and Chestnut Soup**

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

Source: Eric Tucker for Melissa's World Variety Produce

Ingredients

2 large leeks, washed halved lengthwise and thinly sliced  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
¼ tsp salt  
½ cup cooking sherry  
2 tsp thyme, dried  
4 bay leaves  
4 cups celery root, peeled and cut into 1" cubes  
1 cup vegetable stock  
5 cups water  
4 oz chestnuts, dried  
1 tsp lemon zest, minced  
½ tsp nutmeg, ground  
1 Tbsp tarragon, fresh, minced  
¼ tsp black pepper  
1 Tbsp white miso  
Lemon wheels, for garnish

Tarragon, fresh, chopped, for garnish

In a large soup pot cook the leeks, garlic, and ½ cup sherry/wine/stock over medium heat, stirring often, for 10 minutes or until the leeks are very tender and start to caramelize. Add the thyme, bay, celery root, 8 cups of stock, and chestnuts. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes, or until the celery root and chestnuts are soft. Add the lemon zest, nutmeg, tarragon, pepper, and miso. Remove from heat and discard the bay leaves. In a blender, blend the soup in small batches until smooth. Garnish each serving with a lemon wheel and some chopped tarragon.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 160, Protein 2g, Fat 4g, Percent Calories From Fat 29%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 16g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 387mg.

### **Horseradish Root, Carrot and Apple Salad**

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

Source: Chef Andrew Faulkner for Melissa's World Variety Produce

Ingredients

2½ cups carrots, coarsely grated  
3 whole apples, coarsely grated  
½ cup sour cream, fat free  
2 Tbsp horseradish root, peeled and finely grated  
2 Tbsp parsley, fresh, chopped  
1 tsp lemon juice, fresh  
1 tsp sugar

In a bowl stir together the carrots, the apples, peeled and coarsely grated, the sour cream, the horseradish to taste, the parsley, the lemon juice, the sugar, and salt and pepper to taste, cover, and chill the salad for 1 hour, or until cold.

Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less but requires additional unattended time.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 80, Protein 2g, Fat 0g, Percent Calories From Fat 4%, Cholesterol 2mg, Carbohydrates 19g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 36mg.

### **Mashed Potatoes with Fresh Horseradish**

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

Source: Melissa's World Variety Produce

Ingredients

2 lbs potatoes, washed, with skins left on  
½ tsp salt  
½ tsp thyme  
¾ cup Half and Half cream, fat free  
3 Tbsp unsalted butter  
¼ lb horseradish root, peeled and cut into 3 inch pieces  
¼ tsp black pepper

In a large pot, combine 2 quarts cold water and salt. Bring to a boil over high heat. Add potatoes and horseradish. Bring back to a boil; lower the heat to maintain a simmer and cook until fork tender, about 20 minutes. Drain the potatoes and horseradish and return to the pot.

Put the milk and butter in a saucepan, and heat over medium-high heat until the butter melts and the milk is hot. Remove pan from the heat and pour over the potatoes and horseradish. Mash the potatoes and horseradish through the food mill, ricer, or by hand into a pot.

Season with pepper. Warm over low heat. Serve immediately.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 154, Protein 4g, Fat 4g, Percent Calories From Fat 26%, Cholesterol 11mg, Carbohydrates 25g, Fiber 4g, Sodium 146mg.

### **Steamed Salsify, Parsnips, and Potatoes with Curry Sauce**

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

Source: Frieda's

Ingredients

1 cup salsify, sliced  
1 cup parsnips, sliced  
1 cup potatoes, sliced  
3 Tbsp lemon juice  
2 Tbsp all-purpose flour  
1 Tbsp butter  
2 Tbsp green onion, minced  
½ cup milk, fat free  
1 tsp curry powder  
¼ tsp salt  
¼ tsp black pepper

Trim and peel salsify; slice thinly into a bowl of water with lemon or lime juice added. This prevents discoloration of salsify. Drain; place slices of salsify, parsnips, and potatoes in saucepan with water to cover. Bring to boiling; reduce heat and simmer 8 to 10 minutes or till tender. Drain; transfer to serving platter. In same pan, melt butter and sauté onion for 1 minute. Stir in flour; add milk all at once. Cook until thickened and bubbly. Stir in curry, salt and pepper; cook 2 minutes more. Spoon sauce over salsify, parsnips, and potatoes; serve.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 154, Protein 4g, Fat 4g, Percent Calories From Fat 25%, Cholesterol 10mg, Carbohydrates 26g, Fiber 4g, Sodium 147mg.

### **Roots — Quick & Simple**

Makes 4 servings (½ cup servings each)

Each serving equals 1/2 cup of fruit or vegetables

Ingredients

2 medium parsnips or rutabagas, peeled and cut in ¾" x ¼" strips  
2 medium carrots, peeled and cut in ¾" x ¼" strips  
1 tsp olive oil  
1/8 tsp salt  
1/8 tsp black pepper

Place in steamer basket over boiling water and steam for 15 minutes, lifting cover periodically during steaming to release steam and acids that can contribute to bitterness. Check for desired tenderness at 15 minutes; cook longer if softer texture is desired.

Remove from steamer basket, empty water from pan, return parsnips and carrots to pan and season lightly with olive oil, salt and fresh ground pepper. Shake or stir gently to coat with seasonings.  
Serve immediately or leave partially covered to conserve heat until ready to serve.

Nutritional analysis per serving: Calories 89, Protein 1g, Fat 1g, Percent Calories From Fat 14%, Cholesterol 0mg, Carbohydrates 19g, Fiber 4g, Sodium 77mg.

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