

Classroom Bites

Carrots



Did You Know

- The carrot is a root vegetable of the Apiaceae family. The edible part of a carrot is known as a taproot.
- Carrots originated in central Asia over a thousand years ago. The original carrots were purple to black in color and much woodier in texture. Europeans started enjoying carrots as a staple food in the 13th century.
- Today carrots come in many colors including purple, black, yellow, orange, red, and white and also range in size from a round 2 inch carrot to a slender 3 foot carrot!
- The average person eats 17 pounds of carrots per year. How many pounds of carrots do you eat?
- Baby-cut carrots are made from full-grown, thin carrots by peeling and cutting them to the desired size and shape. True baby carrots are harvested early and actually look like miniature carrots.

Nutrition Information

Carrots are well known for containing high amounts of beta carotene, an antioxidant which is a form of vitamin A. Beta carotene is important for eyesight, skin, and normal growth. It may also help reduce chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease. Beta carotene was first discovered in carrots, therefore its name came from carrots. Carrots are also a source of vitamin C and potassium, and like most vegetables, a source of fiber.

Gardening

Plant carrot seeds directly in the garden four weeks before the last frost. Some shorter varieties are suitable to container planting. Carrot seeds are small and can be difficult for children to evenly space when planting. Seed tape, on which carrot seeds are glued, can be helpful for planting carrots with kids. Carrots are a biennial plant. In the first year, the plant forms the taproot, which we eat, and foliage. In the second year, the plant grows larger foliage, flowers, and seeds. Consider leaving a carrot over winter to see the carrot's interesting flower the second summer.

Selection

Carrots are usually sold without the stems and leaves to reduce moisture loss. If carrots still have tops, avoid carrots with wilted or brown tops. Select carrots that are firm and bright. Larger carrots generally have a tougher texture, but are great for soups and recipes in which the carrots are cooked.

Storage

Store carrots in the refrigerator in a perforated plastic bag or wrapped in a paper towel for 1-3 weeks. Avoid storing carrots near items that produce ethylene gas like apples or potatoes. Carrots lose moisture through their leafy green tops, so remove the tops before storing.

Cooking

Boil or Steam. Slice carrots into 1/4- to 1/2-inch coins and place into steamer or pan of boiling water. Steam or boil about 5-8 minutes or until tender.

Chop. Add chopped carrots to stews, soups, or pot roasts.

Grate. Add raw, grated carrots to green salads, sandwiches, muffins, cookies, meatloaf, meatballs, or spaghetti sauce for added nutrients.

Microwave. Slice carrots into 1/4-1/2 inch coins and place in a microwaveable dish with three tablespoons of water. Cover with plastic wrap and microwave on high for 4-5 minutes or until tender.

Preserve. For information on preserving carrots, look for MontGuides: Drying Vegetables; Freezing Vegetables; and Home Canning Pressures and Processing Times. Visit www.msueextension.org/nutrition and click on the food preservation link or contact your Extension office.

Raw. Rinse, peel, and eat carrots whole or cut into carrot sticks to enjoy plain or with a low-fat dip or hummus.

Roast. Chop carrots into 1/4-1/2 inch sections, place in plastic bag and shake with olive oil and desired seasonings. Spread on baking sheet and roast at 400°F for 20-30 minutes or until crisp. Roast with other vegetables, such as potatoes, broccoli, asparagus or cauliflower.

Season. To enhance flavor, season with allspice, basil, caraway seed, cloves, cinnamon, curry powder, dill weed, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, tarragon, or thyme.

Adapted from the Carrot Food Fact Sheet developed by Montana State University Extension. For the full fact sheet and other resources, visit: www.msuextension.org/nutrition.

Recipes

Carrot Salad

This easy salad is like a cross between a slaw and a pickle. It makes a nice, simple snack or side dish, but it's also great in a sandwich or taco or on a burger. This is a versatile recipe—substitute lemon juice and zest for the lime or use vinegar. Also, you can use parsley or cilantro instead of mint.

Source: *Chop Chop* (www.chopchopmag.org/recipes)

Servings

4

Ingredients

3 large carrots, scrubbed or peeled
Juice of one lime and grated zest of half a lime
1 tsp honey
1/2 cup chopped fresh mint leaves
roasted sunflower seeds or peanuts (optional)
1/2 tsp salt

Preparation

1. Grate the carrots on the large holes of a box grater.
2. Stir in the lime juice and zest, honey, salt, mint, and peanuts. Taste the salad. Do you think it needs more lime? Mint? Honey? Salt? If so, add it, and taste again.
3. Serve right away or store, covered in the refrigerator, up to 3 days.

Crispy Carrot Fries

In the mood for fries? Instead of the potato kind, try these. Carrots are tasty and quite nutritious!

Source: *Chop Chop* (www.chopchopmag.org/recipes)

Servings

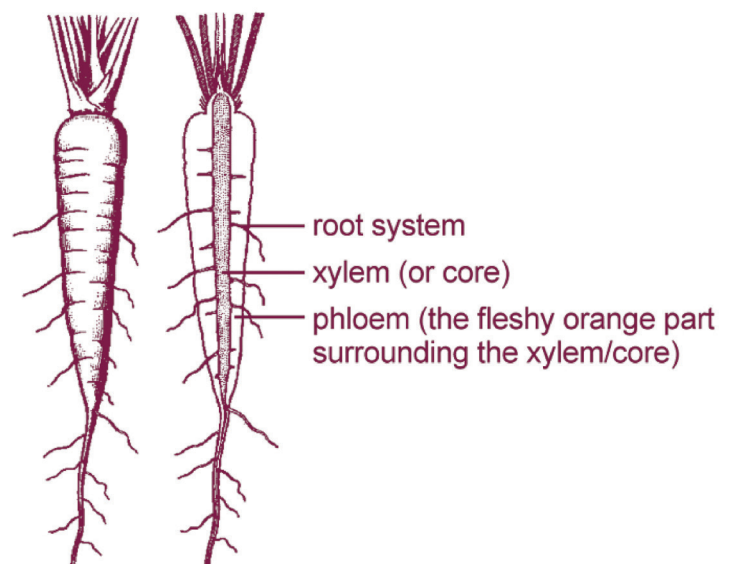
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Ingredients

6 carrots (about 1 lb), well scrubbed but not peeled
1 tsp olive or canola oil
1/2 tsp salt

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Cut carrots into thirds. Cut the thinnest end into two spears. Cut the two thicker parts into four spears each so that you get approximately ten carrot spears from each carrot (depending on the size of carrot).
3. Put the spears on the baking sheet, add the oil and salt and, using clean hands, rub the oil and salt on the carrot pieces until they are all lightly coated with oil.
4. Transfer the baking sheet to the oven and bake until the carrots are tender and golden brown, about 30 minutes.
5. Serve right away.



Activities

C is for Carrot

Developed by: Erin Jackson, FoodCorps Service Member

Grades

K-3

Objectives

This lesson discusses the health benefits, parts, growing cycle, and attributes of carrots. Students demonstrate their learning by creating a poem or song about carrots. Students will be able to:

- Use their five senses to explore, describe, and draw a diagram of a carrot.
- Identify the parts of a carrot plant and how carrots are grown.
- Describe why carrots are good for their bodies/health.
- Create a fun poem/song about carrots.

Materials

- Grade-level appropriate book about carrots. Recommendations: *Carrot Soup* by John Segal, *The Giant Carrot* by Jan Peck, and *Carrots Grow Underground* by Mari Schuh
- One bunch of carrots, or five carrots, with green leaves. If available, pick carrots from your school garden for the activity.
- White board or butcher paper
- Roasted Montana-grown carrots and/or raw carrot sticks for taste test. If possible, use different varieties that are different colors such as purple, orange, and yellow.

Directions

1. Read story about carrots and discuss what happened in the story.
2. Show students a real carrot (including the green stem and leaves). Invite students to name the plant parts visible (root, stem, leaves) and the function of each. Roots anchor plants and draw nutrients and moisture. Stems move moisture and nutrients throughout the

plant. Leaves are the main location for photosynthesis. Which plant part are we eating when we eat a carrot? How does a carrot grow--above the ground or under the ground? Explain to students that carrots are an excellent crop for Montana because they can survive cold weather and frost.

3. With younger children, first ask them to describe the carrot that you are holding up and record their descriptions on the board (orange, long, skinny, roots, green, grows underground, dirty, bunnies like to eat). Review the five senses and pass around the carrots for students to explore. Record additional descriptive words on the board. With older students, pass out one carrot per small group and have them draw a detailed diagram of the carrot with labels. Cut a carrot open lengthwise so that they can draw the cross section for comparison. Have them record descriptive words next to their diagram.
4. Take a brain break with some "Carrot Yoga"! Start as a seed curled into a tiny ball then slowly stand up tall and reach your arms into the sky as a growing seedling. Next, lie on your back in a ball and stretch your legs into the sky to represent the leaves growing out of the ground.
5. Ask students why they think carrots are a healthy food to eat. Inform them that carrots are packed with Vitamin A to help your skin and eyesight and that they give you X-Ray eyes (make binoculars with your hands around your eyes)! They also contain fiber to help with digestion and keeping you full and they contain vitamin C to prevent you from getting sick. Carrots are a super food! Pass around carrots for students to taste. Do a class "cheers to carrots" and then crunch together. Have students record additional descriptive words based on the taste and texture of the carrots (record on the board with younger students).
6. Using the long list of descriptive words generated by the students and facts discussed during class, have students create a poem or song about carrots. This can be done in small groups or together as a class. Share the poems/songs in your class and/or present to other classes to spread the excitement about eating carrots! Students could also come up with a list of fun names or ways to enjoy carrots at snack time, breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Notes:

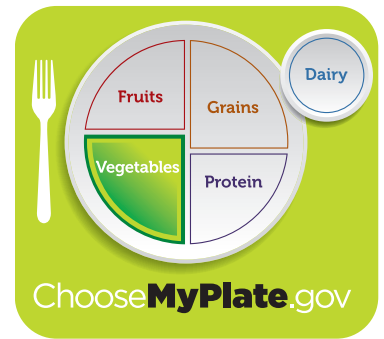
Book Nook

Tops and Bottoms, by Janet Stevens
Carrots Grow Underground, by Mari Schuh
The Giant Carrot, by Jan Peck
Carrots, by Inez Snyder
Oliver's Vegetables, by Vivian French



Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit:
www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.



4 Montana Harvest of the Month: **Carrots**



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between the Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, the National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: www.montana.edu/mtharvestofthemonth.

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