

NOVEMBER: ROOT VEGETABLES

As you may guess, “**Root Vegetables**” are plant roots that used as vegetables – yes, we eat the roots of these nutritious plants! Many root vegetables, due to their rich red and orange color, are great sources of vitamins A and C, and carotenoids/antioxidants, but also contain lots of nutritious minerals and fiber.

CHECK OUT THE MANY VARIETIES OF HEALTHY ROOT VEGETABLES DESCRIBED BELOW!

Onions- these are used in a variety of dishes and rank sixth among the world's leading vegetable crops. **Onions** not only provide flavor; they also provide health-promoting phytochemicals as well as nutrients. **Onions** come in three colors — yellow, red, and white. There are no nutritional differences among these **onion** types. Look for **onions** that feel dry and solid all over, with no soft spots or sprouts. Avoid selecting **onions** with green areas or dark patches.



Carrots- the most popular root vegetable is the **carrot**. **Carrots** are a good source of vitamin A that is very important for healthy eyesight, skin, and resisting infections. **Carrots** also are a great source of beta carotene, a healthy carotenoid, which makes them bright orange in color. These orange plant pigments were first identified in **carrots** which why they are called carotenoids. Beta carotene may help reduce chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease.



Radishes- there are five main varieties of **radishes**; the most popular in the United States are the **red and white radish**. If the leaves are attached to the **radish**, they should be crisp and green. Avoid soft or spongy **radishes**. Be sure to check bagged **radishes** for mold before purchasing. Most varieties of **radishes** will keep up to two weeks in the refrigerator.



Beets- the beet root was generally used medicinally and did not become a popular food until French chefs recognized their potential in the 1800's. Choose **beets** that are firm with deep maroon coloring, unblemished skin, and bright green leaves with no sign of wilting. The taproot should still be attached. Avoid large **beets** which have a hairy taproot. Smaller **beets** will be sweeter and tenderer. Avoid **beets** with scales or spots.



Sweet potatoes- these are a Native American plant, and are among the most nutritious foods in the vegetable kingdom! Packed with vitamins, fiber, and healthy carotenoids/antioxidants, they are grown primarily in the Americas, and should not be confused with the less-nutritious yam usually grown in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, which is much larger and inferior with respect to nutritional quality.



Root Vegetable Tips

- Keep chopped **onions** in a plastic bag in the refrigerator to quickly toss onto a salad, into a pot of soup or stew, into your scrambled eggs, or into your favorite stir-fry! (save some in the freezer too!)
- Dip baby **carrots** into reduced-fat ranch dressing or all natural peanut butter for a healthy snack.
- Grate red **radishes** into whole wheat pasta salads or bean salads for a slightly different taste and texture, with an added boost of healthy veggies.
- Place drained canned sliced **beets**, and chopped **onions** on your salad as an easy way to add two root vegetables to your healthy greens – remember try to eat lots of healthy vegetables every day!
- Bake your oil-and-seasonings-coated **sweet potato pieces** or **sweet potato “fries”** in the same pan with seasoned, boneless chicken breasts or fish fillets for a really easy meal that just needs a salad to make it perfect!

Root Vegetable Recipe!

CARROTS AND RAISINS SUNSHINE SALAD – A QUICK AND EASY STARTER SALAD OR SIDE DISH!

Makes 4-6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 lb. **carrots** peeled and shredded
- ½ cup raisins
- 8 oz. low-fat vanilla Greek yogurt
- 4–6 iceberg lettuce leaves

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together, except lettuce. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. Mix again before serving. Spoon mixture onto lettuce leaves and serve.

Root Vegetable Recipes!

Balsamic Roasted Onions

Ingredients:

- 4 pounds medium-size red onions
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 500°F. Line 2 large baking sheets with foil. Cut onions into wedges. Toss with oil. Arrange onions, cut side down, on baking sheets. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast until onions are brown and tender, rotating pans in oven and turning onions once, about 45 minutes. Melt butter and add sugar, stirring until sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and add vinegar. Return to heat and simmer until the mixture thickens, about 2 minutes. Arrange onions on platter and drizzle glaze over. Sprinkle with parsley. (Adapted from Utah State Extension)

OVEN BAKED SWEET POTATO

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Wash **sweet potato**. Place potato on cookie sheet, then pierce skin on top a few times with a fork. Cook for about 45 minutes or until tender and you begin to see some “syrup” coming out of the fork holes. Cut open sweet potato and enjoy plain, or add your favorite topping such as:

- Drained, canned, crushed pineapple
- Garlic and rosemary sautéed in light olive oil
- Vanilla low-fat Greek yogurt and sprinkle of cinnamon
- Warm applesauce
- Sprinkle of nutmeg, allspice, cinnamon, or all three!

MICROWAVE OVEN BAKED SWEET POTATO – A GREAT TIME SAVER!

Wash, then pierce top of **sweet potatoes**. Place them on a paper towel. Cook 2 medium potatoes on high for 5-9 minutes, till soft to the touch. For 4 potatoes, cook on high for 10-13 minutes.

Cut open sweet potato and enjoy plain, or add your favorite toppings such as those listed above.