

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Editor: Nina Altshul

Spring 2010 / Week 3 of 13

Planned harvest: Peas (Sweet + English Mix), Spinach, Carrots, Mustard Greens, Green Garlic, Oranges, Yellow Onions, Red Potatoes.

Carrots (*Daucus carota*) belong to the umbeliferae family which includes some 2,500 members, including parley, celery, parsnip, cilantro, fennel, caraway, dill and the roadside weed Queen Anne's lace. The carrot originated in central Asia, first eaten by the hill dwellers of Afghanistan. The early cultivated varieties were purple and pale yellow. The first orange varieties did not appear until the 1600s in the Netherlands.

Carrots are one of those tasty fresh treats we all love: there is just nothing better than pulling up a carrot from the soil, brushing off the dirt and taking a bite. Seasonal treats from the farm, they not only taste great but also their nutritional value is extremely high: vitamin A and beta carotene (which gives them their orange color) are hailed as good for our eyes, and they also contain a lot of fiber, calcium, potassium and other trace minerals.



Preparation tips: Scrub carrots with a vegetable brush under running water to remove dirt; there is no need to peel unless you are removing damaged areas since carotene and trace minerals are close to the carrot's skin surface. To store them, remove the greens and keep them in a refrigerator in a plastic bag, where they will last for 2-4 weeks. For long-term storage, try steaming them lightly for about 3 minutes, then submerge in cold water, drain and let dry; pack into airtight containers and freeze.

Carrots will work their nutritional magic both raw or slightly steamed. If you have a juicer, carrot juice is as good a treat as it gets. Try them grated or chopped in salads, stir-fries, soups, and casseroles, or try sautéing them with a bit of butter and parsley or ginger, soy sauce and a touch of curry spice. A little bit of grated carrot in tomato sauce will sweeten it without adding sugar. Even carrot greens can be used: added to stocks, or chopped into soups (remove the biggest stalks) will contribute a carrot flavor (see a carrot top soup recipe in last year's newsletters).

The pickup moves to the Community Garden

Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*) is another member of the umbeliferae family, and is an old-world herb: sources suggest it has been native to a vast area ranging from southern Europe through the Near East all the way to India. Both the leaves and seeds of the cilantro plant are used, forming an integral flavor of several world cuisines, including the local Southwestern and Mexican dishes.

Spring in Southern Arizona spells an abundance of cilantro. When you bring it home, wash it in one or two rinses, let drain and dry and then store in a zip-lock bag with a wet paper towel in your refrigerator. Fresh leaves can also be frozen, and no thawing is required before using.

Here's another favorite recipe for using and preserving large amounts of cilantro: home-made basic curry paste. In a food processor process 7-10 quarter-size slices of peeled fresh ginger, 3 large cloves of garlic, and one onion, coarsely chopped, to a smooth paste. Transfer to a bowl. Then process together 2 large tomatoes, coarsely chopped, ½ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro, including soft stems, and 1-3 fresh green chile peppers such as Serrano. Heat ¼ cup peanut oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat, add the ginger onion paste and cook 2-3 minutes, then over medium heat until golden brown, 5-7 minutes. Mix in the pureed tomato mixture and cook, stirring until all the juices evaporate and the oil separates to the sides. Let cool and store in an airtight container and refrigerate up to 5 days or freeze up to 3 months in serving-size portions. To use, heat the paste and pan-fry your favorite curry spices, whatever vegetables or meats or tofu you wish to use, then mix in water, yogurt, buttermilk, coconut milk, cream or vegetable or chicken broth in varying proportions in order to gain the right consistency of the curry sauce and to cook up the veggies and/or meats (recipe adapted from *1,000 Indian Recipes* by Neelam Batra).

RECIPES ETC.

Martha's mother-in-law's horseradish/carrot recipe

(Submitted by Fran Driver)

Slice 6-8 medium carrots into strips and boil in salt water 10 - 15 minutes (not until soft). Reserve ¼ cup of carrot water.

In a separate bowl mix 2 Tbsp chopped onions, 2 Tbsp horseradish, ½ cup mayo, ¾ tsp salt, ¼ tsp pepper, and ¼ cup carrot liquid.

Place carrot strips in a baking dish, cover with bread crumbs and mixture and bake at 375 for 15-30 minutes.

Fran's suggestion: You might want to reduce the amount of mayo up to half of the amount stated above. Also, try this horseradish mixture with cooked kale (or some other greens)... Add a couple more things (tomatoes, more onions, etc.), stuff it in a pita and who-la ☺.

Veggie Mash with a Twist

(submitted by Fran Driver)

Carrots, turnips, and horseradish give added dimension and flavor to mashed potatoes. Use a microplane to make quick work of grating carrots and horseradish.

2-1/2 pounds potatoes
3 pounds turnips peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
6 Tablespoons margarine or butter, softened
2 Tablespoons horseradish cream or drained bottled horseradish, or to taste
1/4 cup grated carrots
2 to 4 teaspoons sugar
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
1 teaspoon ground pepper

In a large sauce pan cover the potatoes with salted cold water in a large pot and simmer, uncovered, until very tender, 20 to 30 minutes (depending on size of potatoes). Drain potatoes in a colander and, when just cool enough to handle, peel. Transfer potatoes to a bowl.

While potatoes are cooking, in another pot cover turnips with salted cold water and simmer, uncovered, until very tender, 10 to 20 minutes. Add the carrots to the turnips after they have been cooking for 10 minutes. Drain turnips and carrots in a colander and immediately add to warm potatoes, then mash with butter and horseradish. Season with sugar (to taste), salt, and pepper and stir in parsley. Yield: 5 to 6 servings

Spicy Carrot Soup

(From www.carrotrecipes.net, submitted by Morgana Wallace)

8 carrots, coarsely chopped
5 celery sticks, cut into pieces
2 cloves of garlic, chopped
1 large onion, chopped
4 cups of water
1 tablespoon of olive oil
1 teaspoon of curry powder
Salt

Heat up the olive oil in a frying pan; then fry the chopped garlic and chopped onion for 4-5 minutes. Add a teaspoon of curry powder, then stir. Add all of the remaining ingredients except the salt and cook until the vegetables are tender. Mix in a blender until the soup is smooth. Add salt to taste and serve.

Nina's Carrot Cake

This recipe started with Mollie Katzen's classic carrot cake recipe, and I adapted it to make it a bit healthier and even yummiier.

Poppy seeds (optional)
1 ½ cups (3 sticks) of vegetable spread (or butter)
1 ¾ cups brown sugar
4 eggs
4 tsp vanilla extract
1 lemon (for the rind and juice)
2 cups white flour
2 cups whole-wheat flour (preferably pastry flour)
1 tsp salt
½ tsp baking soda
1 Tbsp baking powder
3 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp pumpkin pie spice mix
2 ½ cups finely shredded carrot
½ tsp fresh grated ginger
¾ cups chopped pecans
½ cup raisins
½ cup unsweetened coconut
1 cup canned pineapple, drained

Preheat the oven to 350 F and generously grease a 9x13 inch pan. Sprinkle in the poppy seeds and tilt the pan to distribute the seeds evenly.

Shred the carrots and combine with the lemon juice.

Beat together the veggie spread and sugar in a large bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. When the mixture is fluffy, stir in the vanilla and lemon zest.

In a separate bowl, stir together the dry ingredients. Add this to the sugar and egg mixture in stages, alternating with the carrots, beginning and ending with the dry mixture. With the last addition of flour, stir in the ginger, pecans, raisins, coconut and pineapple. Mix just enough after each addition to combine, and don't over mix.

Spread the batter evenly in the baking pan, and bake about 45 minutes or until a probe inserted into the center comes out clean. Remove and let cool either in the pan or remove it to a rack.

Let cool completely before spreading with icing which is optional. For icing mix 2 sticks of cream cheese and 1 stick of butter (both at room temperature) with 1-2 cups of powdered sugar (depending on your sweet tooth) and at least 1 tsp of vanilla extract. Mix well and spread. And don't forget to let your husband and kids lick the spoon and the bowl!