

BUY FRESH - BUY LOCAL

Food of the Week: Carrots

Carrots have been a food since the first century and are believed to have originated from Afghanistan and adjacent areas. Many varieties different from the common American carrot can be found in Asia, which have purplish-red roots, beet colors, and light gray leaves. The common carrot found in the United States is named the Mediterranean type since it originated from Europeans coming to discover the "New World" in the 1500s. Originally the vegetable was used as a houseplant, medicine, and as a dye due to its yellow and red colors. Later in the 1700s Holland introduced the common orange carrot.

Carrots are 2-year plants. The first year the root develops by storing nutrients such as beta-carotene, vitamin C, fiber, water, and sugar among others. The purpose of the root is to provide nutrients for the carrot plant. However, carrots are harvested after 2-3 months preventing the plant from blooming, thus preserving the nutrients in the root, which then can be consumed. If the carrots are not harvested, the plant and its flowers will use the nutrients in the root, thus the carrot will lose its texture, flavor, and nutritional value to humans.

Carrots are a good source of beta-carotene, which is converted into vitamin A in the body. Beta-carotene is an antioxidant, which helps in preventing cancer by eliminating free radicals in the body. Many studies indicate that carrots can help prevent cardiovascular disease, lower blood pressure, prevent some forms of cancer, and decrease the risk of myocardial infarction. Carotene and vitamin A in carrots can also help prevent cataracts and improve night vision. Carotene and vitamin A may also be found in many skin products due to its vitalizing effects.

Nutrition Facts per 1 medium carrot: calories: 31, carbohydrates: 7.0 g, protein: 1.0 g, fat: 0 g, cholesterol: 0 mg, fiber: 2.0 g, sodium: 25 mg, potassium: 233 mg, vitamin A: 2025 RE

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Recipe of the Week: Royal Carrot Soup

Cooking time: >20
minutes

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

- 3 c Chicken broth
- 2 c Grapefruit juice
- 6-8 Carrots (medium) (1 lb) pared, cut in chunks
- 1 Onion (medium), cut in chunks
- 3/4 t Ground cumin
- 1/2 t Ground cinnamon
- 1 c Plain low-fat yogurt

Preparation

In a large saucepan, combine broth, grapefruit juice, carrots, onion, cumin, and cinnamon. Simmer for 25 minutes or until carrots are tender. Puree vegetables and cooking liquid in blender or food processor. Return to saucepan; heat.

Nutrition Information per serving: calories: 112, carbohydrates: 19 g, protein: 6 g, fat: 2.0 g, cholesterol: 3.0 mg, fiber: 2 g, sodium: 454 mg, potassium: 469 mg, vitamin A: 1325 RE, vitamin C: 31 mg

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