



Nutrition Notes: April 2016: Harvest of the Month- Parsnips!

Parsnips

PARSNIP CROSS - SECTION:



Tidbit

Parsnips are a nutty, sweet, hearty root vegetable that flourish in cold climates and can land on your plate in winter or early spring. They resemble carrots, but are white-yellow in color. Add them to soups, stews and salads or serve them as a delectable side dish.

Kid-Friendly Eating Tips

- Cut raw parsnips into strips (like carrots) and eat with dip.
- Shred raw parsnips, sprinkle with lemon juice to prevent browning, and add to a salad.
- Purée or mash up parsnips like you would potatoes; this would also be a great base to a soup.
- Add diced parsnips to a soup, stew or casserole.
- Substitute parsnips for carrots in a recipe.

Selection Tips

- Look for firm, crisp parsnips; avoid any that easily bend or have soft, moist or brown spots.
- Parsnips are most tender at ~8". Smaller parsnips will be sweeter and more tender—these are good for eating raw. Parsnips that have been overwintered will also taste sweeter.
- If greens of the parsnips are still attached, make sure they are not wilting and dull in color.

History of Parsnips

Parsnips are a member of the carrot family, which comes as no surprise when you look at the resemblance in size and shape. This starchy root is native to the Mediterranean—it was widely cultivated by the ancient Greeks and Romans. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, it was as popular as the potato. Originally the size of a baby carrot when full grown, it was found that the parsnip grew bigger as the Roman Empire expanded to colder, northern climates. Our northern climate in Vermont is great for producing parsnips! Here, they can grow to the size of large carrots and are enjoyed for their nutty, slightly sweet and spicy flavor.

Benefits

- Parsnips are an excellent source of vitamin C, B9 (folic acid), and the mineral potassium. They also contain: B5 (pantothenic acid), B6 (pyridoxal phosphate) calcium, copper, magnesium and phosphorus.
- Parsnips are generally a great detoxifying food for the body.

Fun Facts

- Parsnips are a close relative to parsley; parsley, in turn, can be bred to develop a parsnip-like root (see High Mowing Seeds' Eagle Parsley Root on their web site).
- Parsnips were used as a sweetener in Europe, during a time when sugar was hard to come by and honey was expensive; they were replaced by the sugar beet in the 19th century.
- Parsnips were considered an aphrodisiac ("love potion") by the ancient Greeks and Romans.