

Vegetable of the Month

Carrots



Most of us refer to carrots as the vegetable that is good for our eyes. This is because carrots are a good source of vitamin A that is very important for healthy eyesight, skin, growth, and helps our body resist infection. According to a study conducted by researchers of the USDA, eating carrots may lower cholesterol levels. Carrots are also a great source of beta carotene.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (78g)		Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 35	Calories from Fat 0		
% Daily Value*			
Total Fat 0g	0%		
Saturated Fat 0g	0%		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%		
Sodium 40mg	2%		
Total Carbohydrate 8g	3%		
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%		
Sugars 5g			
Protein 1g			
Vitamin A 270%	• Vitamin C 10%		
Calcium 2%	• Iron 0%		
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4			

In fact, carrots contain a group of plant pigments called carotenoids, and beta carotene is a member of this group. These plant pigments were first identified in carrots and therefore their name was derived from the word carrot. Beta carotene is linked to reducing chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease.

Carrots have a higher natural sugar content than all other vegetables with the exception of beets. This is why they make a wonderful snack when eaten raw and make a tasty addition to a variety of cooked dishes.

Varieties

There are many varieties of carrots, but the variety typically found in supermarkets is from 7-9 inches in length and 3/4 - 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Carrots are usually sold packaged in plastic bags. Baby carrots were once longer carrots that have been peeled, trimmed to 1 1/2 - 2 inches in length and packaged. True baby carrots are removed from the ground early and actually look like miniature carrots.

How to Select

Carrots are available and in season all year long. Look for well shaped carrots. Pick carrots that are deep orange in color. More beta carotene is present in carrots that have a darker orange color. Avoid carrots that are crackled, shriveled, soft, or wilted.

Storage

Carrots are best stored between 32 - 50°F in the crisper section of the refrigerator. If you buy carrots with the green tops still on, break off the tops and rinse, place in a plastic bag and store as described above. Storing them in the refrigerator will preserve their flavor, texture, and the beta carotene content. Do not store them with fruits. Fruits produce ethylene gas as they ripen. This gas will decrease the storage life of the carrots as well as other vegetables. This is why it is best to store fruits and vegetables separately.

Preparation

Although carrots lose some of their vitamins when peeled, dishes prepared with peeled carrots taste fresher and better. Cook carrots in a small amount of water until they are tender, or save time and cook them in the microwave. Season with dill, tarragon, ginger, honey, brown sugar, parsley, lemon or orange juice.



Make Carrots Part of Your 5 A Day Plan

It is easy to make carrots part of your 5 A Day plan. Carry raw carrots in a sack lunch, to your next picnic, or in the car when you are on the go. There are many different ways that you can eat raw carrots, and the choices are almost endless. They can be eaten whole, in sticks, cut into rounds, and chopped or shredded in salads. Kids love the mild taste of carrots!

Recipes

Gingered Carrots

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

- 1 lb carrots
- 1 Tbsp margarine
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 2 Tbsp fresh ginger, or 1/2 Tbsp dried ginger
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp white pepper
- 1/4 tsp salt

Cook carrots in boiling water for 3 minutes or until tender. Cool. In a saucepan melt margarine and brown sugar until it begins to boil. Reduce heat, cook for 5 minutes to caramelize. Add apple juice and bring to a boil. Cook until sauce is reduced to a light syrup. Add carrots, ginger and cumin. Cook on medium heat until glazed. Add salt and pepper.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories 118, protein 1g, fat 3 g, percent calories from fat 23%, cholesterol 0 mg, carbohydrates 22 g, fiber 4 g, sodium 179 mg

Carrots and Raisins Sunshine Salad

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

1 lb carrots (5 or 6), peeled and shredded

1/2 cup raisins

1 carton (8 oz) low-fat vanilla yogurt

4 - 6 iceberg lettuce leaves

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together, except lettuce. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 15 minutes. Toss again before serving. Serve on lettuce leaves.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories 157, protein 5g, fat 1 g, percent calories from fat 6%, cholesterol 4 mg, carbohydrates 35 g, fiber 4 g, sodium 83 mg

Carrots and Pineapple Gelatin Salad

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals one half 5 A Day serving

1 cup boiling water

1 small package lime flavored gelatin

1/2 cup cold water

1 Tbsp white vinegar or lemon juice

1/2 cup non-fat mayonnaise

Pinch salt and pepper

1 carrot, shredded

1 can crushed pineapple in own juices, drained

Blend all ingredients together, except carrots and pineapple. Freeze for 20 to 30 minutes. Add carrot and pineapple. Stir and freeze for 1 hour.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories 60, protein 1g, fat 0 g, percent calories from fat 0%, cholesterol 0 mg, carbohydrates 14 g, fiber 1g, sodium 176 mg

Crunchy Stir-Fry

Makes 4 servings

Recipe Source: Produce for Better Health /
Washington Apple Commission

1/2 cup onion, vertically sliced

1 cup carrots (2 medium), thinly sliced

1 tsp vegetable oil

1 tsp dried basil, crushed

1 cup fresh or frozen Chinese pea pods

1 Tbsp water

1 Golden Delicious or Criterion apple (medium), cored and thinly sliced

Stir-fry onion, carrots and basil in oil in non-stick skillet until carrots are tender. Stir in pea pods and water; stir-fry 2 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in apples, Serve hot.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 74, protein 2g, fat 2g, percent calories from fat 27%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 12g, fiber 3g, sodium 12mg

Power Gold Smoothie

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Produce for Better Health

2 cups chopped or grated carrots*

1 1/2 cups pineapple juice

3 Tbsp honey

3 - 4 ice cubes

1/2 cup vanilla non-fat yogurt

* Place only chopped or grated carrots in blender and turn on high. Through lid, slowly drizzle in about 2 to 3 Tbsp of the pineapple juice, allowing carrots to be pureed until smooth.

Slowly pour in remaining juice with honey. Allow to blend until smooth and somewhat frothy; then with blender on high, add ice cubes. Blend until ice cubes are blended smooth. Stop blender, add yogurt, return lid and blend until mixed. Pour into chilled glasses and enjoy!

*Chef's Note: Using raw carrots in this smoothie will produce a unique texture. If smoother consistency is desired, microwave the grated carrot with 1 Tbsp water in a covered microwave dish on high for 2 to 3 minutes. Proceed as above.

Nutrition analysis per serving: calories 180, protein 3g, fat 0g, percent calories from fat 0%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrate 43g, fiber 2g, sodium 45mg