Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Carrots

A native of Afghanistan, carrots are now grown extensively throughout the United States and are available year-round. A versatile vegetable, the carrot ranges from globular to long-pointed, and the color, though most often orange, varies from white to yellow to purple-fleshed. Carrots are available from July through September.

Information on carrot varieties is available through your county Extension office.

Selection

- The best carrots are those that are well-formed, smooth and firm, and blemish-free.
- Smaller types are more tender than the large varieties, and a deep color indicates more vitamin A.
- Avoid carrots that are wilted, flabby, or cracked. Also avoid those with large green “sun-burned” areas at the top and roots that are flabby from wilting or those that show soft decay.
- Excessive masses of leaf stems at the neck often indicate carrots with undesirably large cores. However, the condition of the tops does not indicate the quality of the root.

Storage

- Remove the green tops before storing because they increase the respiration rate and draw moisture from the carrots, causing shriveling.
- Place carrots in a plastic bag before storing in a refrigerator crisper at 32 to 45 degrees F.
- Carrots taste best when used within 2 weeks, but the nutritional value will keep for several weeks.
- Prevent bitterness in carrots by storing them away from apples and other fruits that give off volatile gases (ethylene) when they are ripening.

Yield

Due to variables including moisture content, size, and variety, it is impossible to recommend specific quantities to buy. The following recommendations are approximations.

- 4 servings = 1 to 1¼ pounds
- 1 bushel carrots (without tops) = 50 pounds
- 1 bushel carrots = 16 to 20 quarts, canned
- 1 quart = 2½ to 3 pounds

Nutrition

The “Dietary Guidelines for Americans” recommend that adults need 2–2½ cups of a variety of vegetables daily. Carrots are an excellent choice to help meet that requirement. Carrots have antioxidants that help prevent cancer and fight heart disease. A 1 cup serving of cooked carrots provides more than 330% of the recommended dietary allowance of Vitamin A for adults. Carrots provide a variety of other nutrients including fiber. One cup of cooked carrots has only 45 calories.
Safe Handling
Clean surfaces, utensils, and hands after touching raw meat and poultry and before you use them on fresh produce. To remove dirt, wash carrots thoroughly in cold water. Wash just before using. Scrub well with a brush if you want to eat the fiber and nutrient-rich skin. Do not use soap, detergent, or bleach as they can be absorbed by the carrots. Lift carrots from the water to prevent redepositing of dirt and residues.

Serving
- Carrots may be scraped, pared, or cooked with the skins on. Skins can then be slipped off cooked carrots when held under running water. Carrots can be boiled, steamed, baked, or sautéed. Overcooking results in loss of nutrients and flavor. Raw carrots cut into match-like sticks are a popular and nutritious addition to a relish tray or salad. Add 1 teaspoon of lemon juice to 1 cup raw carrots to enliven the flavor of less than garden-fresh carrots.
- Carrots can be used as garnishes or snacks, in salads, and even in desserts.
- Serve buttered with salt and pepper.
- Sprinkle with snipped parsley, mint, chives, or cut green onions.
- Top with lemon butter.
- Season with basil, chervil, ginger, rosemary, savory, or thyme.
- Cream or mash.

Written by Barbara A. Brahm, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences.
Reviewed by Lydia Medeiros, Ph.D., R.D., Extension Specialist, Ohio State University Extension.