



CARROTS

some ideas for the menu

Carrots have been a staple in many countries for thousands of years although it is only since the 16th century that they have been orange.

Earliest records show carrots were purple; later records show red, yellow and white carrots were grown. Orange is the main type available in New Zealand although there are increasing amounts of purple and other coloured carrots, both regular and baby size, available in some markets.

What to look for

Choose carrots that are firm, well formed, with a good orange colour. Smaller carrots tend to be sweeter and more tender. If carrots are sold with leaves attached, they should be fresh and bright green.

Availability

Carrots are available all year. Spring carrots are available October to January.

Store

Refrigerate in plastic bags.

Baby carrots are available in orange, yellow and purple and usually come in small bunches with their leaves attached.

Carrot snacks are available washed in bags. These are grown to specifications to keep the carrots a similar size. Available all year.

Baby peeled carrots are actually larger carrots that are trimmed down to 'baby size'. They will keep for at least a week in the refrigerator. As they are already peeled, a light frosting may appear on the surface; place in cold water for a few minutes and they will return to their brilliant orange colour.

How to prepare

Trim ends and peel. Slice as required. Popular grated, finely sliced or diced for salads and juiced. Leave baby carrots whole and young carrots don't need peeling. Wash well or lightly scrape to ensure all soil is removed. Old and large carrots need to be peeled. Carrots are versatile in both preparation and cooking methods. Slice into rings, cubes, strips, or chunks. Carrots are often grated for salads; vary the size of grater and experiment with the more interesting coarse graters or peelers.

Ways to eat

They can be eaten raw as snacks, or cooked and used in savoury and some sweet dishes, such as carrot cake or muffins. Carrots should be cooked until they are tender and depending on preference, still slightly crunchy. Cooked, tender carrots may be mashed or puréed.

Cooking methods

Bake, barbecue, boil, braise, microwave, roast, steam, stew, stir fry, smoke, juice or raw.

Nutrition

Carrots are a good source of vitamin A, from carotenoids, in particular beta-carotene, which is converted to vitamin A by the body. One medium carrot supplies more than the recommended dietary intake for a day. Carrots are also a source of dietary fibre, folate and vitamin B6 and contain a dietary significant amount of potassium. The main phytonutrients in carrots are the carotenoids and falcarinol which are being studied for their protection against some cancers.



Vege, rice and quinoa cakes

Makes 12 medium size cakes (24 mini cakes)

- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 1¼ cup finely chopped broccoli
- 2 carrots, peeled and grated (approx 2 cups)
- ½ cup frozen peas
- freshly ground pepper to taste
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups grated edam cheese
- 2 cups cooked rice and quinoa, cooled

Preheat oven to 180°C, spray 12 muffin pans with oil.

In a medium sized saucepan, heat oil, add onions, broccoli and carrots.

Stir fry for 5 minutes, then add peas, and pepper to taste and cook a further 2 minutes. Set aside and allow to cool.

Whisk the eggs in a large bowl, fold in cheese, cooled quinoa and rice and vegetables.

Spoon the mixture into the muffin pans, using the back of a spoon to push the mixture down.

Bake in preheated oven for 12-15 minutes or until set and golden. Leave to cool in the pan.

Store cakes in a container in the fridge.

Tip: Wrap and place in the lunch box next to an ice pack or cold food item.

A blend of brown rice and quinoa (available from the supermarket) was used. Alternatively, use all brown rice, or all quinoa, rather than a mix.



Kale, carrot and bean chunky soup

Serves 4

4-6 kale leaves, stems removed

- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 2 carrots, diced
- 1 head broccoli, chopped
- 1 leek or onion, finely sliced
- 1½ L vegetable stock or water
- pinch salt
- pepper, to taste
- 1 x 400g can cannellini or butter beans

Wash kale leaves and slice into bite-sized pieces. Heat oil in a large saucepan.

Add carrots, broccoli, leek or onion, and stir fry for 2-3 minutes.

Add kale and stock and bring to the boil.

Reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add beans and simmer for a further 5 minutes.

Serve.

Variations:

Add chopped parsley for garnish.

Use silverbeet, watercress or spinach in place of kale.

Add some chopped garlic with the carrot.

Carrot and cumin dip

Serves 4

- 8 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 tsp whole cumin seeds
- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 2 Tbsp peanut butter
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice

Heat oven to 225°C.

Mix carrots with the cumin seeds and oil.

Spread out in a roasting dish.

Roast in preheated oven for approximately 45 minutes or until browned, stirring every 10 minutes.

Remove from oven and allow to cool.

In a food processor, blend roasted carrots with peanut butter and lemon juice.

Serve with pita bread crisps or vegetable sticks.

