



A monthly publication for members of the Olympia Food Co-op and its surrounding communities

December 2019

## Root Vegetables For You to Get to Know and Love

We get a lot of questions about root vegetables in the Produce Department, so I thought I'd spend this month sharing nutritional summaries and recipes for some of the lesser known stars of our root section. If you aren't familiar with some of these, have never tried them, or think you hate them from bad childhood experiences, don't worry, you're not alone. Roots are filling and economical vegetables to incorporate into your diet in the winter, and if you learn how to cook them, they are delicious too. Try them roasted, in casseroles, in stir-fries, and in soups. Hope you enjoy,

*-Erin, OFC Produce Manager*

### Beets

Ah beets...one of the most beautifully colored vegetables in the produce department, this tasty root stores well and is easy to prepare.

There are lots of great articles about the health benefits of eating beets, but I found a recent one from Consumer Reports [www.consumerreports.org/healthy-eating/are-beets-good-for-you/](http://www.consumerreports.org/healthy-eating/are-beets-good-for-you/) to be especially interesting. It says beets are "a good source of folate, magnesium, vitamin C, and fiber. But what really sets beets apart are the lesser-known—but highly beneficial—nutrients they contain. 'Compounds in beets—such as nitrates, betalains, and betaine—have been studied for their positive effects on oxidative stress, inflammation, cardiovascular health, and cognition,' says Whitney Linsenmeyer, Ph.D., R.D., an assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics at Saint Louis University and a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Research has found that betalains (which give beets their rich red color) have powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Betaine is essential for many cell functions and also protects cells against oxidative stress, which can damage cells."

One of my favorite ways to eat beets is to select smallish beets then quarter and steam them. I don't peel them unless they have been in storage for a long time. They



*Photo by National Institute of Korean Language CC BY-SA 2.0 kr*

are typically sweet and delicious and don't need any seasoning.

If you already know you don't like cooked beets, try grating a raw beet onto a salad or adding a few pieces in when you blend up a smoothie. ■

### Bridget's Easy, Beautiful, and Delicious Beet Soup

**1 small onion, chopped**

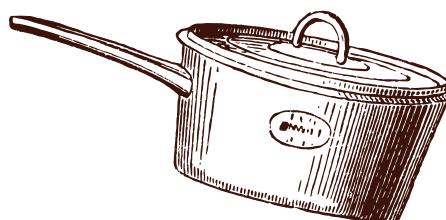
**6-7 medium sized beets, cubed**

**8 cups broth (Better than Bullion Chicken is her fave)**

**1 can coconut milk**

**salt to taste (if you are using unsalted broth)**

Saute the onion in a little oil in a large soup pot. Once the onion starts to become translucent, add the beets. Saute for several minutes and then add the broth. Cook until the beets are completely soft. Using an immersion blender, puree soup until smooth. Stir in the coconut milk and serve. So delicious and pretty! ■



### Burdock

Burdock is the root that flummoxes people the most in the produce department. "What is that?", they ask? "It looks like a stick!". Burdock is easy to use once you are familiar with it. The outer skin scrapes away easily and burdock can then be cut into rounds or matchsticks. I found a summary of burdock's nutritional profile on the website [umami-insider.com](http://umami-insider.com), a website that celebrates Japanese cooking:

"In Japan, a large number of dishes utilize burdock root, also called gobo. The slightly sweet, earthy flavor of burdock root compliments other root vegetables, such as radishes and carrots, and earthy flavors such as mushrooms. Younger burdock root has a milder flavor and is an excellent addition to salads.

The low-calorie, low-sodium vegetable contains a wide assortment of essential vitamins and minerals, including Vitamin C, Vitamin E, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid, iron, calcium, zinc, and others. It is also a good source of non-starch polysaccharides, which help to improve digestion and reduce cholesterol and blood sugar levels...it is also high in fiber and potassium, helping to regulate heart rate and blood pressure." ■



### Kinpira Gobo

*from justanecookbook.com*

**1 gobo (burdock root)**

**1 carrot**

**1 Tbsp neutral flavored oil**

**(vegetable, canola, etc)**

**2 tsp sesame oil (roasted)**

**1 Tbsp white sesame seeds (roasted/toasted)**

**Ichimi Togarashi (Japanese chili pepper) (optional)**

**Seasonings:**

**¾ cup dashi (use kombu dashi for vegetarian)**

**2 Tbsp sake**

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**1 Tbsp sugar**

**1 Tbsp mirin**

**1½ Tbsp soy sauce**

Peel gobo's skin with peeler or scrape (peel) the skin off with the back of kitchen knife. Then diagonally slice thinly so that each piece is about 2 inch length. Then collect some of the slices and cut into thin matchsticks. Soak the gobo in water or vinegar water (just one drop of vinegar would do). Change water a couple of times until the water becomes clean. Then leave the gobo in water until you are ready to stir fry. Cut carrots into matchsticks. In a frying pan, heat the oil over medium high heat and stir fry gobo first. Then add carrot next after you cook gobo for a few minutes. Add the ingredients for the seasonings and cook until most of liquid evaporates. When the liquid is almost gone, add sesame oil and sprinkle sesame seeds and ichimitogarashi. Serve! ■

## Parsnips

Parsnips are familiar to many as the root vegetable that looks like a big cream-colored carrot. With their distinctive flavor, parsnips can add a unique taste to root roasts and casseroles. A summary of their flavor and nutritional profile comes from [berkeleywellness.com](http://berkeleywellness.com):

"A root vegetable, the parsnip is a member of the Umbelliferae family whose members include carrots, celery, chervil, fennel, and parsley. Parsnips are grown for their delicate tasting, carrot-like roots, which can grow up to 20 inches long and 3 to 4 inches across at the top. The smaller parsnips are preferable and more delicate in flavor than the larger ones.

Parsnips' flavor is best in winter, when they are most abundant. Planted in the spring, they take a full three to four months to mature. Then, they are left in the ground until a hard frost occurs in late fall. The frost begins the conversion of the starches in the parsnip to sugars, giving parsnips their pleasantly sweet, nutty flavor. Parsnips are rich in fiber, especially the soluble fiber pectin, which may lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels. Good amounts of vitamin C and the B vitamin folate are found in this subtle, sweet-flavored root vegetable, along with respectable amounts of thiamin, vitamin E, iron, and magnesium." ■



*Photo: Mike Licht*

## Roasted Parsnips

*from fifteenspatulas.com*

**3 lbs parsnips**

**3 tbsp olive oil**

**1/2 tsp sea salt**

**1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper**

Preheat the oven to 425F.

Peel the parsnips, then cut into evenly sized matchsticks.

Place in a large bowl and toss with the olive oil, salt, and pepper.

Evenly distribute the parsnips on a baking sheet in a single layer, making sure they have a little room on the sides to brown and caramelize.

Roast for about 20-25 minutes, until the parsnips are starting to turn golden brown on the edges. Toss the parsnips to redistribute, then roast for another 10-15 minutes, until tender and golden.

Serve warm and enjoy!

Note on cooking times: The exact time varies depending on how big the matchsticks are, so make sure to check on them once in a while to see if they've become caramelized and fork tender. That's when you know they're done. ■

## Rutabagas

Not know for their beauty, Rutabagas are nonetheless a versatile and staple root for many people. They are a cross between a turnip and a cabbage, and have a flavor that is reminiscent of both. They can be eaten raw or cooked. When cooked, rutabagas can add a nice mellow golden color to lighter colored vegetables like turnips and potatoes. Their nutritional profile comes from [foodfacts.mercola.com](http://foodfacts.mercola.com)



*Photo: pin add*

"Rutabaga, known as swedes in most parts of the world, are an excellent source of vitamin C, potassium, manganese, fiber, thiamin, vitamin B6, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus. These nutrients provide a combination of nutritional benefits to promote healthy function throughout the body, while lowering the risk of heart disease and cancer. In fact, clinical studies show that the risk of colorectal and prostate cancers can be lowered by ingesting healthy amounts of brassica vegetables, such as rutabaga." ■

## Mashed Rutabaga with Sour Cream and Dill

*from simplyrecipes.com*

**2 to 3 pounds of rutabagas, peeled and chopped into 1 inch chunks**

**Salt and black pepper**

**2 teaspoons butter**

**1/4 cup to 1/2 cup full-fat sour cream or yogurt (more or less to taste)**

**2 Tbsp chopped fresh dill or chives**

Cover the chopped rutabaga with about 1 inch of cold water and bring to a boil. Add a generous pinch of salt and boil until tender, about 30-40 minutes. Drain and return the rutabagas to the pot.

Let steam, then mash: Reduce the heat to low and let the rutabaga steam for a minute or two. Mash with a potato masher.

Add the butter, sour cream, and salt and pepper to taste. Just before you serve, mix in the chopped dill or chives. ■