



# CARROTS AND PARSNIPS

## What is It?

- Parsnips and carrots are root vegetables from the Apiaceae family.
- Parsnips and carrots get sweeter after a frost because cold weather turns their starch into sugar.
- Parsnips can have such high sugar content that they were used to sweeten desserts before sugar was widely available.
- Parsnips are native to Eurasia and have been cultivated by humans for at least 2,000 years.
- Carrots originated in Central Asia over a thousand years ago and were purple to black and much woodier in texture. Dutch farmers in the 1600s bred the first orange carrots.
- Washington is the fourth largest producer of carrots that are sold fresh and the largest producer of carrots grown for processing.
- Baby-cut carrots are made from full-grown, thin carrots by peeling and cutting them to the desired size and shape.
- The average person eats 17 pounds of carrots per year.

## Grow It

Carrots can be seeded directly in the garden four weeks before the last frost. Some shorter varieties are suitable for container planting.

Carrot seeds are small and can be difficult for children to evenly space when planting. Seed tape, on which carrot seeds are glued, can be helpful for planting carrots with kids.

Carrots are a biennial plant. In the first year, the plant forms foliage and the taproot, which we eat. In the second year, the plant grows larger foliage, flowers, and seeds. Consider leaving a carrot in the ground over the winter to see the carrot's interesting flower the second summer.

Parsnips are cool season vegetables that prefer sunny locations and fertile, deep, well-drained soils. Incorporate plenty of organic matter and an all-purpose fertilizer into the soil before planting. Plant seeds 1/4–1/2 inch deep. Thin seedling parsnips to three inches apart in a row, with rows 12–18 inches apart. Plant two to three weeks before the last frost.

Parsnips taste best when plants have been exposed to several weeks of cool, frosty weather. Harvest parsnips once the roots reach desired size—typically about five to ten inches long.





**Make It**

Recipe: Mashed Parsnips and Potatoes Yield: 4 servings	
Ingredients	Directions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 pound parsnips (medium size)</li><li>• 3 medium potatoes (1 pound)</li><li>• 1/2 cup low-fat milk</li><li>• 1/2 teaspoon salt</li><li>• 1/4 teaspoon pepper</li><li>• 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder</li><li>• 1 tablespoon butter</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Scrub parsnips and potatoes under running water and peel.</li><li>2. Cut into similar size pieces.</li><li>3. Place the vegetables in a medium saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring the water to a boil and simmer until vegetables are soft, 15 to 20 minutes.</li><li>4. Drain the vegetables and mash. Stir in milk, salt, pepper, garlic powder, and butter. Serve hot.</li></ol>

This recipe was adapted from [Maryland SNAP-Ed](#).



Carrots growing, credit: WSDA



**Make It**

**Recipe: Roasted Parsnips and Carrots**  
Yield: 3 servings

Ingredients	Directions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3/4 pound parsnips, peeled if needed</li><li>• 3/4 pound carrots, peeled</li><li>• 1 tablespoon vegetable oil</li><li>• 1/8 teaspoon salt</li><li>• 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder</li><li>• 1/8 teaspoon black pepper</li></ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Rinse or scrub fresh vegetables under running water before preparing.</li><li>2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.</li><li>3. Cut the parsnips and carrots into uniform pieces such as 3-inch x 1/2-inch sticks or 1-inch thick slices.</li><li>4. Place cut parsnips and carrots into a large bowl. Add the vegetable oil and stir to coat the carrots and parsnips.</li><li>5. Add the salt, garlic powder, and black pepper and stir until the vegetables are well coated with seasonings.</li><li>6. Place vegetables in a single layer on large baking sheet, being careful not to overcrowd the pan. Lining the baking sheet with foil or baking parchment will help with clean-up.</li><li>7. Roast in the preheated oven for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring the vegetables halfway through the time. The carrots and parsnips should be caramelized to a medium brown and blistered.</li><li>8. Serve warm.</li></ol>

This recipe was adapted from [Oregon Food Hero](#).

## Eat It

Parsnips are a great source of fiber which aids in digestion and helps the stomach feel full. Parsnips contain manganese, potassium, and are high in vitamin C, vitamin K, and vitamin B9.

Carrots are well known for containing high amounts of beta carotene, which the body uses to make vitamin A. Beta carotene is important for eyesight, skin, and cell growth and may also help reduce chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease. Beta carotene was first discovered in carrots, which is how it got its name—carot-ene.

## Read It

- Tops and Bottoms, by Janet Stevens
- Carrots Grow Underground, by Mari Schuh
- The Giant Carrot, by Jan Peck Carrots
- Oliver's Vegetables, by Vivian French
- Carrot Soup, by John Segal
- The Giant Carrot, by Jan Peck



Carrots, credit: WSDA

## Find It

- Washington carrots and parsnips may be available at grocery stores. Check the product label or shelf tag to see where they were grown. Carrots and parsnips are also commonly found at Washington state's many farmers markets, farm stands, and other local markets. Peak season for parsnips is October–April. Carrots are in peak harvest season June–October, but store well and may be available year-round.
- Find a [Farmers Market in Washington](#). Many farmers markets and vendors accept WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit, and SNAP Market Match.
- Find local farms and markets that sell Washington-grown carrots here: [Washington Food & Farm Finder - Eat Local First](#).
- Find local farms and markets that sell Washington-grown parsnips here: [Washington Food & Farm Finder - Eat Local First](#).

This resource was adapted for Washington state from Montana Harvest of the Month Harvest at Home: Carrots.  
[Harvest at Home Carrots](#)