



CARROT TALKING POINTS

2. A Slice of History about the Carrot

- Carrots, or “skirrets,” were originally purple, white and yellow that originated in Afghanistan. They were purple, red, white, and yellow, but never orange.
- The orange carrot was developed in Holland in honor of the House of Orange, the Dutch Royal Family and as a tribute to William I of Orange. They invented the orange carrot by cross breeding pale yellow carrots with red carrots.
- They are a member of the Umbelliferae family, which also includes celery, parsley, dill, cilantro, caraway, cumin, and the poisonous hemlock.
- The carrot is a root vegetable of the Apiaceae family. The edible part of a carrot is known as a “taproot.” This plant is cultivated for its enlarged edible root and its foliage is fine and lacy. In fact, the wild carrot is actually a familiar wildflower known as “Queen Anne’s lace.”
- Carrots are believed to have originated in the Near East and central Asia, near Afghanistan, where they were cultivated for thousands of years. The ancient ancestors of the modern carrot were not yellow-orange, but of purplish colors ranging from lavender to almost black. The yellow-orange root arose from a mutant variety that lacked the purple pigment. Both the purple and yellow-orange varieties spread west to the Mediterranean, where the ancient Greeks and Romans used them for medicinal purposes.
- Europeans started using carrots as a food item sometime around the Middle Ages, eventually becoming a dietary staple in the 13th century. In the 14th century, carrots were brought to China, which is now the world’s leading carrot producer. During the 17th century, European agriculturalists further developed the yellow-orange variety and eventually discontinued the production of purple carrots. About the same time, carrots were introduced into Japan and the newly settled American colonies.
- Carrots were among the first vegetables to be canned following the development of the process by the French food technologist, Appert, in the early 1800s. The high beta carotene content of carrots was discovered in the 19th century and then leveraged during World War II by the British who developed a variety of higher beta carotene carrots so that their aviators might see better at night. Since then, plant breeders have sought to develop carrot varieties that are sweeter and more tender.



3. & 4. How Do Carrots Grow?

- Two year life cycle—edible root is formed the first year. Flower and seeds are produced the next year.
- Ideal temp. is 60-70 degrees, so China, Russia and some states in the US can grow carrots all year.
- Growing season is 110-160 days.
- Need loose, well-drained soils.
- Can be mechanically harvested at up to 1,000 #s per day.

- The phloem carries the nutrients and sugars throughout the plant. The xylem carries minerals and water to the plant. That is why the different layers of carrots taste different; the middle part is not as sweet as the outside.

5. Reasons to Eat Carrots

- Rich in beta carotene — more than 400 percent of the recommended Daily Value (DV) — a form of Vitamin A when absorbed by the body.
 - Important for eyesight, skin, and normal growth
- Fiber, Vitamin C and potassium,
 - Aids in metabolism and body functions.
- Vitamin B6, folate and several essential minerals including calcium, magnesium and manganese.

6. How do you pick a good Carrot?

- Unlike most other vegetables, carrots are more nutritious when eaten cooked than eaten raw (except when juiced). Because raw carrots have tough cellular walls, the body is able to convert less than 25 per cent of their beta carotene into vitamin A. Cooking, however, partially dissolves cellulose-thickened cell walls, freeing up nutrients by breaking down the cell membranes.
- Carrots should be brightly colored and not cracked. If they are cracked that means they are dried out.
- Store carrots in the refrigerator.
- Also, it is usual for carrots to be cut into pieces and eaten after boiling or steaming, but done in this way, half the proteins and soluble carbohydrates will be lost so it is more advisable to cook them whole and then cut up.
- The tops of carrots should be removed before storing them in the refrigerator. Tops will drain the carrots of moisture, making them limp and dry.

Fun Facts:

Why is a carrot called a carrot?

- Carrots contain a group of plant pigments called *carotenoids*, of which beta carotene is a member. These plant pigments were first identified in carrots (giving them their orange color); therefore, their name was derived from the word *carrot*.

Carrot Varieties

- Carrot varieties vary only slightly in taste, shape, or size, so most consumers are unable to tell one variety from another. Varieties are actually grown in particular growing regions or for specific uses. For example, carrots found in supermarkets that are packaged in cello bags are grown specifically larger and for the supermarket.
- Baby-cut carrots are made from full-grown, small diameter carrots by peeling and cutting them to the desired length. They are planted closer together so the roots stay slim and there is less waste when the carrots are cut to their small size. True baby carrots are removed from the ground early and actually look like miniature carrots.

Carrots are commonly grouped into two main varieties: eastern and western.

Eastern

- Central Asia more than 1,000 years ago.
- Purple or yellow, but the purple pigment was lost in later varieties.

Western

- Netherlands in the 15th century
- Orange color was popular with countries associated with Dutch independence

Interesting Facts about Carrots

- The carrot soon caught on in England as both a food and a fashion accessory. Ladies would often use carrot tops to decorate their hats.
- The scene from the movie *It Happened One Night* in which Clark Gable leans nonchalantly against a fence eating carrots while talking to Claudette Colbert inspired the creators of Bugs Bunny to give him the same nonchalant, carrot-eating demeanor.
- China is the world's top carrot producer. The country produced 35 percent of the world's carrots in 2004. Russia is the second top producer and the United States the third.
- Carrots are about 87% water.
- Eating too many carrots can cause a person's skin to turn yellowish orange, especially on the palms or soles of the feet. This is called *carotenemia*. It is completely reversible once the consumption of carrots is reduced.
- The longest carrot ever recorded was nearly 17 feet long.
- The largest carrot ever recorded weighed 18.985 pounds.