

CARROTS

Educator | VermontHarvestoftheMonth.org

Harvest of the Month provides resources for the cafeteria, classroom, and community to promote the use of local, seasonal foods.



History of Carrots

Carrots are derived from a Middle Eastern crop called Queen Anne's Lace. This wild ancestor is also a taproot crop but has a white root. For thousands of years, the carrot was not a popular vegetable because it had a woody texture and was difficult to eat. A subspecies of this plant has been selectively bred over centuries to produce the crisp and sweet garden vegetables that we eat today. Today the largest producers of carrots are China, the United States, Poland, Japan, and France.

Fun Facts

- When consumed in large quantities, carrots can add a yellow tint to skin. This is caused by the carotene in carrots. Don't worry, this phenomenon is not dangerous at all.
- Carrots are not just orange, some varieties produce white, yellow, purple, and even black carrots.
- In addition to the root of the plant, the leafy green tops of carrots can be eaten too.
- Carrots will taste sweeter after a light frost—the cold converts some of the vegetable starches into sugars.

Reading Corner

Children's Books

- » *The Giant Carrot*, by Jan Peck
- » *Carrot Soup*, by John Segal
- » *The Carrot Seed*, by Ruth Krauss



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Benefits

Carrots are rich in vitamin A and can supply over 100% of the recommended daily value in just one serving! They also contain vitamin B6, vitamin K, and modest amounts of other essential nutrients.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Science | Pickling Carrots

Supplies needed:

Carrots cut into strips, water, 1 cup cider vinegar, ¼ cup sugar, 2 garlic cloves (lightly crushed), 1.5 Tbsp dill seeds, 1.5 Tbsp salt, heat proof bowl or canning jars

Directions:

- Scale up the recipe based on how many students are in your class.
- Place carrot strips in heat proof bowl or canning jars.
- Bring remaining ingredients to a boil in a sauce pan, then reduce heat and simmer 2 minutes.
- Pour pickling liquid over carrots and cool, uncovered.
- Chill carrots, covered, at least 1 day or up to 1 month. Have students taste test the pickled carrots. When desired flavor is reached, remove from the bowl or jars and send home with students in smaller containers
- Have students discuss, compare, and contrast the flavor before and after pickling.

English | Carrot Life Cycle Stories

Supplies needed:

Whole carrots, carrot seeds, images of carrots flowering/ going to seed, paper, pencils

Directions:

- Review the life cycle of a carrot using visuals, emphasizing that carrots are biennial- they take two growing seasons to produce seeds.
- Have each student draw an image of part of a carrot's life cycle, and write a short story to accompany it. Give students specific questions to address in their story: Where do carrots grow? How long does it take for them to mature? How do they get from the farm to our plate?
- Take turns sharing completed carrot stories while snacking on carrot sticks