



Root Nutrition and Storage

Beets

Beets probably originated from a wild form in North Africa and belong to the Goosefoot family of plants, along with spinach, chard, lamb's quarters and quinoa. The leaves are edible and quite delicious. In fact, people primarily grew beets for their leaves, not their roots, until spinach became a more popular green. Beets come in a variety of colors, including white, red, golden, orange and red and white striped. They are high in fiber, packed with folate (an important B Vitamin) and are relatively low in carbohydrates. Beets lower blood pressure and increase oxygen delivery throughout the body.

Storage: If you buy beets with their greens attached, remove the greens and store them separately, in a plastic bag. The greens will stay fresh for up to one week, depending on when they were picked. The beets can be stored loose in the refrigerator crisper for several weeks.

Carrots

Carrots belong to the Parsley family of plants (also known as Apiaceae), along with celery, parsnips, coriander, caraway, cumin, dill, fennel and of course, parsley. The wild ancestor of our orange carrot is a wild, purple carrot native to Afghanistan. Many species of wild carrot are also native to North America (for example, the wildflower called Queen Anne's Lace.) If you have diabetes, you've probably been told not to eat carrots, along with other root vegetables. However, the carbohydrate in carrots is actually quite low and although some of that carbohydrate is in a sugar-like form, for



many people, carrots don't raise blood sugar levels enough to worry about. Orange carrots are packed with fiber and Vitamin A and a host of phytonutrients, but more colorful carrots like purple/orange or purple/yellow have even more to offer. Look for these multi-colored varieties at your local Farmers Market.

Storage: Carrots store well in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper. If greens are attached, remove them and store them separately. They will last for about a week, depending on when they were picked.

Celery Root

Celery root was developed from wild celery and may have been used in China as early as 500 B.C. It is used very often in Europe and Scandinavia, and is well known in French cuisine. Celery root contains fiber, magnesium, Vitamin C, and iron.

Storage: Store unwashed and unpeeled celery root in a cool, dark space with good air circulation for several weeks.

Parsnips

A member of the Parsley family, parsnips have been around since Roman times and they used to be a major crop in colonial America, until the potato took over as the primary starchy veggie in our diets. Parsnips are a great source of folate, fiber and Vitamin C.

Storage: Parsnips store well in a plastic bag in the crisper of the refrigerator and will last for several weeks.

Pink, Purple or Red-Skinned Potatoes

Potatoes hail from the Andes in South America and belong to the Nightshade family of plants, along with tomatoes, bell peppers, and eggplant. There are thousands of varieties, all differing in color, starch and water content. For example, russets are starchy while red-skinned, purple, and Yukon gold potatoes are medium-low starch and contain a lot more water than a russet. Purple, red and red-skinned potatoes are packed with phytonutrients and Vitamin C.

Tip: Any kind of potato that is cooked, and then chilled or even cooled to room temperature, will raise blood sugar levels a lot less than one eaten hot out of the oven.

Storage: Potatoes are best stored in a cool, dark space, with plenty of air circulation, where they can keep for 2 to 3 months. They should not be stored in the refrigerator.

Rutabagas

Rutabagas belong to the Brassica family of plants and are a cultivated cross between turnips and cabbage. They probably originated in Scandinavia or Russia during the Middle Ages. They are usually called 'swedes' in other parts of the world. Rutabagas contain half the calories and carbohydrate, 4 times the fiber, and much more calcium, Vitamin C, and B Vitamins than any kind of potato and can be used instead of potatoes in many recipes.

Storage: Store unwashed rutabagas in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, with a paper towel, where they will keep for several weeks.

Sweet Potatoes

The sweet potatoes and yams we buy in this country are all technically sweet potatoes. They all come from the Morning Glory Family of plants. Wild sweet potatoes are native to Central and Northern South America. The darker the color, the more nutrients sweet potatoes contain, although they are all good sources of fiber, B Vitamins, and calcium.

Storage: Store unwashed sweet potatoes in a cool, dark space with good air circulation for several weeks.

Turnips

Turnips are native to Eastern Europe and belongs to the Brassica (Mustard) family of plants, along with kale, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and mustard greens. They are very low in carbohydrates, and are packed with Vitamin C. The leaves are edible and are delicious, though turnips are usually found without their leaves in the supermarket. Look for turnips with leaves at the your local Farmers Market. Most of the turnips we buy are white with a purple top, but other varieties exist, including some that are orange, green or red. Smaller turnips taste sweeter. Larger turnips have a more pronounced, peppery bite.

Storage: If you buy turnips with their greens attached, remove the greens and store them separately, in a plastic bag. The greens will stay fresh for a few days, depending on when they were picked. Store unwashed turnip roots in a plastic bag lined with a paper towel in the refrigerator for several weeks.

***For more healthy recipes,
please visit Your Healthy Kitchen
via www.yrmhealthconnect.org***