



Health Benefits of Root Vegetables

~Dr. Nicola Dehlinger

Walking at the farmer's market or in the produce section of the grocery store, you will see rows and rows of amazing root vegetables, all in season, delicious and affordable. Because these veggies are incredibly healthful, we wanted to introduce you to ones you may not be familiar with, or help you get acquainted with others in a more intimate way. Ayurvedic doctors and practitioners believe that root vegetables literally "root" you to the earth. When it gets colder and you feel the need for more warm, grounding foods, adding root vegetables to your family's diet can deliciously benefit both your body and soul.

Grown beneath the earth, root vegetables have allowed all of mother nature's healing benefits to seep in. Incredibly nutritious, root vegetables are able to absorb high amounts of minerals and other nutrients from the soil. They are also able to absorb important nutrients from the sun through their leaves. They are high in nutrients like vitamins C, D, E, K, and beta-carotene. In addition, they are a wonderful source of minerals like potassium, phosphorus, magnesium and some iron.

Root vegetables are rich in complex carbohydrates without being high in calories or fat. This means you can eat a larger portion without gaining weight. The complex carbohydrates can help reduce cravings for sweets, don't disrupt blood sugar, and help you to stay fueled for longer. Root vegetables are high in fiber and when there is a lot of fiber in a food, it helps us to feel more full. Fiber is also great for regulating cholesterol and hormones, it acts as a broom for your bowels, and helps to keep digestion regular. The high amounts of nutrients and soluble fiber will help satisfy your cravings for junk foods. And those cravings can make it nearly impossible to lose excess weight.

The nutrients in root vegetables help to clean the blood, support the cardiovascular system, improve skin health and enhance eye health. Root veggies support optimal immune function and help to keep you healthy. Root veggies are also healing to the stomach, spleen, pancreas and reproductive organs and aid in the removal of toxins from the body. Here are some examples of root vegetables (and spices) that would make a great addition to any meal:

Ginger: Helps treat arthritis, nausea, and heart conditions, relieves colds and headaches, aids digestion

Onion: Antibacterial, increase bone density, have anti-inflammatory properties, and lower esophageal- and mouth-cancer risks. Peel off as little of the outer layers as possible, because the onion's flavonoids, which provide antibacterial benefits, are more concentrated in those areas.

Garlic: Anti-inflammatory, antibacterial; cardiovascular, antiviral, cancer-preventative, and metabolism-boosting qualities.

Fennel: Natural treatment for anemia, indigestion, constipation, and respiratory disorders

Yam: All great sources of vitamin B6 and potassium, improve organ function

Carrot: Improves eyesight, protects against macular degeneration, promotes lung health.

Radish: high in vitamin C, lower cholesterol, urinary tract disorders, and increase fresh oxygen in the bloodstream

Beet: Provide support for the body's antioxidants and detoxification process, cancer preventative. You can even eat or juice the greens of the plant, which are also dense in nutrients.

Dandelion: Improve overall liver function, aids your digestion, stimulates the release of bile from the liver into the gallbladder (aids constipation and absorption of fats), natural diuretic. Rich in vitamins A, B-complex, C and D, iron, potassium and zinc.

Burdock root: Acne, eczema, endometriosis, psoriasis, and uterine fibroids. Burdock root tea can also be used as a wash to treat skin infections, eczema, and psoriasis.

Recipe:

Take 2-3 pounds of your favorite root vegetables and herbs and chop them into similar sized cubes (1/2 inch works well). Place them in a baking dish and toss with 2-4 tablespoons of olive oil, sea salt and pepper. Feel free to add any other spices you like – cayenne, rosemary, curry, turmeric, etc. Place in oven at 375F for 30-45 minutes, until vegetables are tender.

Enjoy!