

Farm to School: Highlighting Local Fruits & Vegetables

Fruit & Vegetable facts

Materials to inspire your USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program

— TURNIPS —

A turnip is larger than a radish and is a well known food source for both the root and greens. Turnips come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

HISTORY: Turnips are an ancient vegetable that is believed to have been cultivated almost 4,000 years ago in the Near East. Both the Greeks and Romans thought highly of the turnip and developed several new varieties. Turnips are still very popular in Europe although they are less widely cultivated since the advent of the potato.

Turnips were introduced into North America by early European settlers and colonists. They grew well in the South and became a popular food of this region. Turnip greens, which became an integral part of Southern African-American cuisine, are thought to have been adopted into this food culture because of the role they played during the days of slavery.

Supposedly, slave owners would reserve the turnip roots for themselves, leaving the leaves for the slaves. As Western African cuisine traditionally utilizes a wide variety of green leaves in its cooking, the African slaves adopted turnip greens as a substitute and incorporated them into their culture.

www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=144

BOTANICAL FACTS: We eat many parts of plants that grow underground. We often refer generally to these underground plant parts as “roots,” even though they technically aren’t always the botanical roots of the plant. The parts of the plant that grow into the ground from the base of the plant stem work to anchor the plant, absorb water and nutrients, and store energy. Additionally these underground plant parts all serve specific functions for the plant.



Underground Parts of the Plants We Eat

TYPE	FUNCTION	VARIETIES
Tubers	Swollen underground stems, capable of producing new plants and storing energy for the parent plant. The underground tubers can create new plants if the parent plant dies.	Potato, sunchoke, yam
Tap Roots	A primary root that grows vertically downward and gives off small lateral roots. Many taproots are food or water storage organs and are very long for reaching water deep in the ground.	Beet, carrot, cassava, jicama, parsnip, radish, rutabaga, turnip
Tuberous Roots	A thick and fleshy root like a tuber but without buds.	Sweet potato, yucca
Corms	A short, vertical, swollen underground plant stem that serves as a storage organ used by some plants to survive winter or other adverse conditions such as summer drought and heat.	Celeriac, eddo, taro, water chestnut
Rhizomes	A stem of a plant that is usually found underground, often sending out roots and shoots from its nodes. Rhizomes may also be referred to as creeping rootstalks or rootstocks.	Arrowroot, galangal, ginger, ginseng, lotus root, turmeric
Bulbs	A short stem with fleshy leaves or leaf bases. The leaves often function as food storage organs during dormancy.	Garlic, onion, shallot

More about... TURNIPS

More Facts



- Turnips are harvested in the fall and available throughout the winter and spring.
- To harvest a turnip, you pull it from the base of the leaves.
- The best turnips are firm, heavy, and blemish free with some root hairs.
- Smaller turnips are sweeter, larger turnips are woodier tasting.
- Turnips can be eaten cooked or raw.
- Turnips grow very well in cold climates.
- You can eat turnip roots and green leafy tops.
- Turnips are sweetest after they have experienced a light frost.



Purple Top



White



Red

Cooking Turnips

- Peeling the skin off before eating is optional - the skin of fruits and vegetables often contain the highest levels of nutrients and minerals.
- Sauté or boil the green tops and use like any other leafy green vegetable.
- Eat raw young turnips with a dip or peanut butter. Add shredded raw turnip to salads.
- Boil, bake, roast, mash, or stir-fry the roots. Cook only to the just tender point and avoid overcooking as sweetness will diminish.
- Slice, dice or julienne them.
- Roast turnips with sweeter root vegetables like carrots and parsnips.
- Boil and then purée with a potato for a delicious, low-starch alternative to mashed potatoes.

Nutrition Facts

Turnips are high in vitamin C and fiber, have beta-carotene, vitamin E, and folate, and are a very good source of potassium.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 medium (122g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 35	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 80mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 8g	3%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 1g	

Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 45%
Calcium 4% • Iron 2%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Storage

- Store in a plastic bag in your refrigerator crisper at 32–35°F.
- The green tops can be kept for about a week.
- The root can stay fresh for four to five months.

