

## CARROTS FROM LEAVES TO TIPS

Carrots are more than just bait for Bugs Bunny! They also happen to be one of the best examples of how to reduce food waste with Earth Day right around the corner. Crunchy and naturally sweet, carrots can be used for so much more than sticks to dip into ranch or hummus.



*Carrots and other orange veggies like squash and sweet potatoes are high in beta-carotene that the body converts into vitamin A. Packed with vitamins, minerals, and fiber, they're also an environmentally friendly food.*

Consider supporting local farmers and buying whole carrots from a farmer's market to utilize the entire vegetable from leaves to tips! For visual appeal, look for rainbow carrots that come in a range of colors including white, yellow, orange, red, and purple. Known best for being rich in antioxidants such as beta-carotene, a form of Vitamin A that supports vision and immunity, carrots are also a good source of fiber, Vitamin K, potassium, and Vitamin B6. This versatile vegetable is also among the few commonly associated with sweet and savory culinary delights.

After purchasing your locally sourced carrots, wash the greens well and scrub the skins well. As long as you thoroughly clean carrots, you do not need to peel them and can keep the nutrient-rich skins on. If you prefer the texture of peeled carrots, you can save the peels to make homemade vegetable or chicken broth. I store vegetable trimmings such as carrot peels in a Ziploc bag in my freezer to use when I'm ready to make homemade broth. What a great way to save money and the planet! You may still choose to trim the tops of your carrots off, but make sure not to throw away the leaves. They have a sweet and herbaceous flavor similar to parsley and can be used raw to make a chimichurri or pesto, in salads, or can be sauteed like hearty greens with olive oil, garlic, and red pepper flakes.



While carrots are commonly served raw with dip, I like to do the opposite. You can use carrots to make a delicious dip by roasting them and blending them with a few flavorful ingredients. Read on for a recipe below to make a sweet and tangy dip that pairs well with more vegetables, crackers, whole wheat pita wedges, or a spoon. Carrots also make delicious side dishes and soups and pair well with delicate flavors such as herbs and strong flavors like cumin and cayenne pepper. Instead of adding sugar to tomato sauce or tomato soup, I add carrots for sweetness and to balance out the acidity. To keep your sauces and soups smooth, blend them with an immersion blender or high-powered blender.

Carrot cake may be the most popular dessert made with the hearty root vegetable, but that's not the only sweet recipe you can make with carrots. Shredded carrots can be added to apple muffins, chocolate muffins, baked oatmeal, and even pancakes. I combine shredded rainbow carrots with shredded zucchini to make confetti pancakes for my kids, and they love them. A small handful of organic rainbow sprinkles in the batter help contribute to the festive appearance and appeal and help hide the veggies.

While purchasing locally grown produce of any kind is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint, if you're just looking to add more vegetables to your diet, carrots in any form are a great choice. If you are short on time, you can always find baby carrots, carrot chips, or shredded carrots ready to use in the produce aisle. Frozen carrots on their own or in vegetable blends are a great shortcut to stir-fries, soups, or casseroles. Canned carrots, after being drained and rinsed well can be seasoned and roasted or added to soups or sauces. The humble carrot may have seemed boring to you before, but I promise with the right flavors and preparation they can be a feast for the eyes and taste buds. If you don't believe me, try my recipe for carrot miso dip which is rich in fiber, healthy fats, probiotics, and most importantly flavor.

Note: Since everyone's health history and nutritional needs are so different, please make sure that you talk with your doctor and a registered dietitian to get advice about the diet and exercise plan that's right for you.



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## CARROT MISO DIP

### INGREDIENTS

4 medium-sized carrots, scrubbed and cut into large chunks

1 teaspoon avocado or vegetable oil

¼ cup raw sunflower seeds

3 fluid ounces boiling water

2 teaspoons ginger, peeled and grated

2 tablespoons white miso paste

2 tablespoons seasoned rice wine vinegar

**Try this simple and easy carrot recipe  
that even my picky kids enjoy!**

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Toss cut carrots in avocado oil or spray with oil and roast for about 20 minutes until they're soft.
2. While the carrots are roasting, soak sunflower seeds in boiling water for 10 to 15 minutes to soften them.
3. As you wait for the sunflower seeds to soak, peel and grate the ginger.
4. After the sunflower seeds have soaked for 10 to 15 minutes, blend the water and seeds to make a smooth paste.
5. Add the roasted carrots, ginger, miso paste, and rice wine vinegar to the blender and puree until smooth.
6. Chill the dip in the fridge for at least an hour before serving.

*Parul*

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