

# Naturally Nutritious

BLOG #15

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## AT THEIR ROOTS

Roots anchor plants securely to the ground and keep them standing strong by storing and carrying nutrients, but sometimes there's more to roots than what you see growing above ground. Root vegetables such as turnips, beets, potatoes, parsnips, carrots, celeriac, onions, radishes, and rutabaga grow underground and are all nutritional powerhouses. In fact, many can be used from root to tip, just like I shared in my first carrot article. Some grow hearty greens that can also be cooked, while others may grow vines or flowers. Root vegetables themselves range from white, yellow, and orange through dark red in color, and offer various textures, and different flavors.

Nutritionally, root vegetables are typically rich in complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, and a variety of vitamins and minerals. Their natural sweetness and earthy flavors make them versatile in both savory and sweet dishes. Regular consumption of root vegetables can support digestive health, boost immunity, and help regulate blood sugar levels due to their low glycemic index and high fiber content.



### NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF ROOT VEGETABLES

- **High in dietary fiber:** Supports digestion and promotes a healthy gut.
- **Rich in complex carbohydrates:** Provides sustained energy without spiking blood sugar.
- **Supports immune function:** Thanks to their vitamin C and antioxidant content.
- **Mineral-rich:** Good sources of potassium, magnesium, and iron.
- **Antioxidant properties:** Many contain phytonutrients that help fight inflammation and oxidative stress.
- **Low in fat and calories:** Ideal for weight management and heart health.





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.

Root vegetables are versatile, nutrient-rich ingredients that bring unique flavors and textures to a wide range of dishes. Radishes, with their crisp texture and peppery bite, are enjoyed raw in salads, pickled for tangy condiments, or roasted to mellow their sharpness. Sweet potatoes are beloved for their natural sweetness and are commonly baked, mashed, or used in pies and casseroles. I have been using leftover grilled sweet potatoes, smashing them in a frying pan and then using them as a base for a fried egg in place of bread. Beets offer earthy richness and vibrant color, making them ideal for roasting, juicing, or starring in dishes like borscht. .

Turnips have a slightly spicy flavor and are delicious when roasted, mashed, or added to hearty stews. Parsnips, with their sweet, nutty taste, shine when roasted, pureed, or used in soups. I love to roast parsnips with our turkey on Thanksgiving. Each root vegetable brings its own character to the kitchen, making them staples in both traditional and modern cuisines. Parsnips are sturdy like carrots, but a little softer. They make a great alternative to potatoes for homemade french fries. Made in an air fryer, these parsnip fries are lightly crisp on the outside and tender on the inside. They are less starchy than potatoes and slightly sweet. The spices compliment their sweetness and bring out their savoriness as well. I could eat the entire batch by myself, but I recommend sharing.

## CULINARY USES OF ROOT VEGETABLES

### **RADISHES**

*Crisp and peppery; used raw in salads, pickled, or roasted to mellow flavor*

### **SWEET POTATOES**

*Naturally sweet; commonly baked, mashed, or used in pies and casseroles*

### **BEETS**

*Earthy and vibrant; great for roasting, juicing, or in dishes like borscht*

### **TURNIPS**

*Slightly spicy; enjoyed roasted, mashed, or in stews*

### **PARSNIPS**

*Sweet and nutty; excellent roasted, pureed, or in soups*





# AIR-FRIED PARSNIP FRIES

## WITH SPICED YOGURT DIP



### INGREDIENTS

#### FRIES

3 medium parsnips, peeled and cut as fries

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

½ teaspoon garlic powder

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon black pepper

½ tsp dried thyme

2 tablespoons cornstarch or arrowroot  
powder

#### YOGURT DIP

½ cup plain Greek yogurt

1 tablespoon lemon juice

½ teaspoon ground cumin

¼ teaspoon chili powder

¼ teaspoon salt

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Peel and cut parsnips into even sized sticks. Toss with olive oil first and then coat with herbs, spices, and cornstarch.
2. Preheat your air fryer to 375°F for about 3 minutes.
3. Place the parsnip fries in a single layer in the air fryer basket (work in batches if needed). Cook for 12-15 minutes, shaking the basket halfway through, until golden and crispy.
4. Mix all of the dip ingredients in a bowl and chill until ready to serve.
5. Serve hot parsnip fries with the cool, spiced yogurt dip.

Notes:

Don't overcrowd the basket to help the fries crisp up evenly. The dip can be made in advance and stored for up to 48 hours in the fridge until ready to use.