

Getting to Know Carrots

Before Dutch farmers bred orange carrots to honor the House of Orange in the 17th century, these root vegetables were white, yellow, green, red, and even black. Recently, carrots of many colors have come back into favor. Here are 12 varieties, along with our tasting notes.



Dragon
FAR-EAST CHARMER

This medium-sized bicolor variety from China sports a magenta skin and a brilliant yellow-orange core. Although the dragon carrot's "slightly spicy," "nutty" flavor and "juicy-crisp" texture make it suitable for eating raw or cooked, some tasters found it "noticeably more bitter" when cooked.



Yellow
MELLOW YELLOW

This pale yellow variety has an unusual, near-cylindrical shape. Eaten raw, the yellow carrot has a "light crunch" and "fruity aftertaste" that is "devoid of bitterness." Cooked, this carrot turns "fluffy," its color deepens to lemon yellow, and it tastes "earthy-sweet," like a "sweet potato."



White
PARSNIP STUNT-DOUBLE

You might mistake this pale carrot for a parsnip—until you taste it. It has a "spicy, cedar-y bite" and a "super-crisp" texture, both of which fade with cooking; we recommend enjoying white carrots raw.



Cobalt
TWO-TONED ROOTS

The striking eggplant hue of the cobalt carrot's exterior is even more impressive juxtaposed with its yellow core. Raw, it has a "sweet, winy complexity" and a "hearty crunch." Cooked, it turns brownish-purple and assumes a "mild, grassy" taste and a "dense" texture.



Pink
COLOR ME BEAUTIFUL

Tasters described the flavor of this pink carrot as "bright," "spicy-soapy," "herbal," and "similar to cilantro." When cooked, it turns a deep coral color and develops "yeasty" and "wheaty, earthy" flavors.



Baby
SMALL WONDER

Picked early in its growth cycle, this immature carrot is small—usually no more than 3 or 4 inches—and has a delicate skin that needs no peeling. It's "sweet and tender" with "none of the bitterness" of more mature carrots, but its delicate taste doesn't hold up to cooking. It is often eaten as a crudité.



Orange Long
SUPERMARKET STAPLE

The most common supermarket variety, it has the prototypical carrot shape and color that its name implies: long, tapered, and orange. The orange long is "earthy" and "slightly bitter," with a "sweet, mineral-y background." It is excellent for cooking or eating raw.



Round
CROWD PLEASER

The dense flesh of this stubby variety is extraordinarily crunchy. With "intense, straightforward carrot flavor" and a "faintly bitter" aftertaste, it was a nearly unanimous favorite in our testing. When raw, it is "crisp and juicy"; when cooked, "firm and sweet." Peel carefully, as its thick skin is bitter.



Parsley Root
CARROT COUSIN

Also known as "Hamburg parsley," this variety of parsley (a close cousin of the carrot) is grown for its plump, cream-colored root. Parsley root looks like a parsnip but tastes "more pungent and sharp," like a combination of "parsnip and really strong celery." Because parsley root is so starchy, it's best cooked. We like it roasted, boiled, or mashed.



Purple Carrot
DRAMA QUEEN

This thick, deep purple carrot originated in the Middle East. Its flavor is "complex and tannic" and "less sweet" than orange carrots. Restaurants favor purple carrots because they make for a dramatic presentation. Much like beets, the vibrant exterior of this carrot may stain hands, clothing, and work surfaces.



Parsnip
WINTER WARMER

A relative of the carrot and a winter root staple, its "sugary and floral" taste is like a carrot "doused in perfume." Older, larger parsnips can be tough and fibrous, so avoid any that are more than 1 inch in diameter. Eaten raw, it can be tough and starchy, but steamed, boiled, sautéed, or roasted, it develops a winning creaminess and a mellow sweetness.



Baby-Cut
SWEET CONVENIENCE

Baby-cut carrots are actually whittled from large, mature, misshapen carrots otherwise unfit for commercial sale. Tasters appreciated their convenience (they are sold peeled) and "intense sweetness" but found them "chalky and dry." Glazing or roasting improves their texture and flavor.