



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

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VEGETABLE FEATURE: Black Nebula Carrots

By Chef Andrea

We have a fun vegetable to feature this week—Black Nebula Carrots! They are such a dark purple color they really do look almost black! This is the first year we've grown this variety. Many purple carrots are disappointing because the purple color is only on the skin and once peeled, the purple is gone and you basically have a yellow or orange carrot. When we saw this variety, we were enticed because it was touted to have really good color. Little did we know we had stumbled on a really fun and interesting carrot!

While black carrots are new to us, they are actually the original type of carrot first recorded and thought to have originated in the middle East, specifically Afghanistan. Orange carrots are actually a newer carrot that is the result of horticulturists' efforts to hybridize older varieties. The original carrots were actually purple/black and yellow. When I first saw this carrot come off the wash line, I have to admit my first thought was "oohh, these are not so beautiful." We're accustomed to seeing more refined carrots with uniform shapes, smoother skin, etc. This carrot has a different look that I would describe as being similar to how I would describe an old turtle. This carrot looks ancient and weathered. These carrots are less refined with some odd twists and bumps that make every carrot unique. They also have more root hairs that grow in clumps and don't come off with washing, giving them kind of a crusty, old look. As I started working with this carrot though, I came to realize its natural beauty and I couldn't help but think that it also contains an ancient wisdom that will benefit all of us.

There are some things you should understand about this carrot before you use it. For starters, I'd recommend you peel it. This isn't my typical line, but I do think the finished carrot product benefits from peeling first. You'll notice the color permeates throughout, right down to the core! The deep, rich color comes from a group of plant compounds called anthocyanins. Anthocyanins give fruits and vegetables purple, blue and dark red colors and are found in foods such as beets and blueberries. They are powerful plant compounds that benefit our bodies in a variety of ways. They help prevent cancer, are cardio-protective, anti-inflammatory, and may even benefit our neurological health. The previous sentence doesn't do justice to the health benefits we reap from eating anthocyanins, which is why it's so important to include a variety of plants in your diet! The color compounds in these carrots are so rich, some people actually use them as a natural dye for textiles, Easter eggs, etc. Yes, they will stain your hands, possibly your cutting board, and your clothes. I can tell you that the

What's In The Box?

SALAD MIX: Toss this pretty mix with a red-wine vinaigrette, add a few slices of sweet pepper, olives and a little feta cheese to make a quick Greek salad.

BABY ARUGULA: Mix some baby arugula in with the salad mix for a little spicier salad.

ICEBERG HEAD LETTUCE OR BABY SPINACH: This week's rain has been a challenge for these delicate head lettuces. They may be more perishable due to the conditions, so try to use the lettuce within a few days. Be sure to store your bag of spinach in the refrigerator and keep it cold for the longest shelf life.

JALAPEÑO PEPPERS: Make a little jar of quick pickled jalapeños and keep them in the fridge. They are a nice, spicy condiment to add to sandwiches, eggs, burritos and tacos. There are 2 jalapeños in this week's box.

CAULIFLOWER OR BROCCOLI ROMANESCO: The recent rain and heat wave at the end of last week and the start of this week have been rough on these crops. You may see little black spots on some of the Romanesco. They are only on the tips and when trimmed away, the remainder of the head is still good and usable. We'd encourage you to use these sooner than later as their shelf life may be shorter than usual.

BROCCOLI: Cream of broccoli soup sounds pretty good with the change in the weather.

SWEET PEPPERS: This week's boxes are packed with a variety of sweet peppers including red and yellow bell peppers; Ukraine peppers; and orange Italian frying peppers.

BABY WHITE TURNIPS: Use these tender, pristine salad turnips raw in salads or lightly sauté them in butter. The greens are edible as well, either as a salad green or wilt them down with sautéed turnips.

BLACK NEBULA CARROTS: Read more about these unique carrots in this week's **vegetable feature article**. There are 1.20-1.30 pounds packed in this week's box.

PURPLE MAJESTY POTATOES: We're focused on purple this week! This potato has purple skin & flesh. It's a waxy potato best used for roasting or pan frying.

RED & YELLOW ONIONS: Use this week's yellow onions in the soup recipe and the red ones for the salad recipe.

ITALIAN GARLIC: Store garlic at room temperature until you're ready to use. If you're having trouble peeling it, lay the blade of a chef's knife over the top of the clove and give it a little whack. This will help to loosen the skin.

SPAGHETTI SQUASH: This is the oval shaped, bright yellow squash in the box this week. This is more of a savory, mild squash in comparison to the sweet varieties we've had in recent weeks.

FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISH: This is a new variety we tried, called Felicia. They are purple instead of the traditional red!

discoloration on your hands will go away in a day or two, especially if you hand wash a few dishes. The stain on my cutting board also faded quickly.

You can eat these carrots both raw and cooked. The purple coloring will spread to other ingredients, just as when making things with red beets. They are delicious roasted, but will also retain their color nicely when stir-fried, boiled and steamed. They also make a beautiful and nutrient dense juice. I didn't try this myself, but I found several references that say adding an acidic ingredient to the juice, such as lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, will turn the juice bright pink! There are a few traditional preparations from the Middle East that utilize black carrots. The first is called **Carrot Kanji**. This is a fermented black carrot juice drink that is part of northern Indian culture. It also includes mustard powder and chili powder with the purpose of keeping the body warm in the winter. In Turkey they make **Salgam** which is another fermented vegetable drink.

As I'm still learning how to use and appreciate this carrot, I decided to start with some simple preparations that would highlight the innate beauty of this unique carrot. So this week's featured recipes include one simple soup and a salad. Don't be fooled by their simplicity, they really have a lot of delicious flavor in them and you just feel good knowing you are giving your body such a powerhouse of nutrients! Let me know how you use your carrots and have fun!

Carrot Parsley Salad

Yield: 3-4 cups

4 cups peeled and shredded purple or orange carrots (1-1.25#)	2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice	¼ tsp salt, plus more to taste
1 cup chopped parsley	1-2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar	3 Tbsp toasted unhulled sesame seeds, optional
1 medium red onion, small diced	3 to 4 Tbsp cold pressed flax oil or extra virgin olive oil	

1. Place shredded carrots in a medium bowl and add the parsley and onion.
2. In a small bowl, combine the lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, oil and ¼ tsp salt. Whisk to combine and then pour the dressing over the vegetables.
3. Mix well and let rest for 5-10 minutes. Take a little taste and adjust the seasoning to your liking with additional salt, lemon juice and/or apple cider vinegar. If using, stir in the toasted sesame seeds.
4. The salad tastes best when served immediately, but any leftovers can be stored in the fridge for a few days.

Recipe adapted from Amy Chaplins' book: *At Home in the Whole Food Kitchen*.

Roasted Purple Carrot Soup with Curried Lentils

Yield: 3-4 servings as a main or 4-6 servings as a side dish

SOUP:

1.25# purple carrots (3-4 carrots), peeled and cut into 1-2 inch pieces
1 Tbsp + 2 tsp coconut oil or vegetable oil (divided)
1 tsp salt
1 Tbsp fresh ginger, minced
1 medium onion, small dice
2-4 cups water or vegetable stock
1 to 1 ½ cups coconut milk
Salt & freshly ground black pepper, to taste

LENTILS:

1 Tbsp coconut oil or vegetable oil
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
¼ tsp ground turmeric
2 tsp minced fresh Korean chili or ¼ tsp dried cayenne pepper
¾ cup brown or green lentils
1 ½-2 ½ cups water
½ tsp salt, plus more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Extra-virgin olive oil, for finishing
Cilantro, chopped, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Put the carrot pieces in a medium bowl, drizzle with 1 Tbsp melted coconut oil or vegetable oil and sprinkle in 1 tsp salt. Toss to combine and spread in a single layer on a baking sheet.
2. Roast the carrots for 30-40 minutes, turning once or twice during cooking. You want the carrots to be tender and just starting to get crispy. Once done, remove from the oven and set aside.
3. While the carrots are roasting, prepare the remainder of the soup and the lentils. In a medium saucepot, melt 2 tsp coconut oil. When the oil is hot, add ginger and onion and saute until the onions are translucent. Add 2 cups water or vegetable stock and 1 cup coconut milk. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside. Cover to keep it warm.
4. To prepare the lentils, first melt 1 Tbsp oil in a small saucepot. When the oil is hot, add the cumin, coriander, turmeric and fresh or dried chili. Stir to combine and cook briefly until the spices are aromatic.
5. Stir in the lentils along with 1 ½ cups water. Bring the lentils to a simmer, then adjust the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cover the pan and cook for 15 minutes. You may need to add additional water and cook the lentils for an additional 10-20 minutes. You want them to be soft and tender with just a small amount of liquid remaining in the pan. As they start to soften, stir in ½ tsp salt. Once finished, remove from heat and keep warm.
6. Now it's time to assemble the soup. Put the roasted carrots in a blender along with the gingered coconut milk mixture. Blend until well combined and very smooth. Taste a little bit. At this point you will likely need to add more liquid to get the soup to the consistency you desire. You can add either more coconut milk, water, or stock. If you add coconut milk the soup will be a little more rich and sweet. Adjust the seasoning to your liking with salt and freshly ground black pepper as well.
7. Return the soup to the pan and bring it to an appropriate serving temperature.
8. Ladle the soup into a bowl and top with the curried lentils and fresh cilantro.

Recipe adapted from www.nourishdeliciously.com.