

Turnips and Rutabagas



Turnips are fall root vegetables that are known for their tops and bottoms. The most common type of turnip is mostly white-skinned except the upper area, which can jut above ground and turn purple, red, or green (where the sunlight has fallen). The interior flesh is entirely white. The leaves grow directly from the above-ground root shoulder, with little or no visible crown or neck. The peak season for turnips begins in October and continues throughout the winter.

Similar to turnips, **rutabagas** are also a fall veggie delight. Originally, a cross between a cabbage and a turnip, but takes a few weeks longer to mature than a turnip. Same peak season, but a bit sweeter in taste with smoother leaves, rounder roots, a more yellow flesh and a visible crown or neck where the leaves shoot.

Selection: To find the best turnip or rutabaga, look for smooth, round and firm vegetables—they'll be round or oval. Avoid those with any visible cracks, punctures, deep cuts or decay.

Storage: Storage for rutabagas and turnips is similar—and as you can imagine, a root cellar is considered “ideal”; but if you don't have one, then...brush the loose dirt off the veggies (but don't wash), twist off the tops, leaving about 1/2 inch of stem remaining on the root and store in cool, dark and damp(ish) place (a basement or storage room). These vegetables also store well in the refrigerator (wrapped tightly in plastic bags) for ~1 month.

Nutrients/nutrition: These root veggies are low calorie, low fat, and low sodium and are good sources of calcium, potassium, vitamin B6 and C as well as fiber (so important for gut, bone and heart health, as well as clear vision and glowing skin).

Preparation: While turnips and rutabagas are good when served on their own, they tend to do well combined with other root vegetables in soups and stews. **Baking:** For both turnip and rutabaga, place ½ inch thick slices in a shallow baking dish. Sprinkle with a few tablespoons of water and bake in a 350 F oven until tender. Turnips bake for approximately 30 to 45 minutes and rutabagas for 50 to 60 minutes. **Boiling:** Place either whole or sliced turnips or rutabagas (peeled) into a pot of boiling water. To sweeten the flavor, add a teaspoon of sugar to the pot. Whole turnips will boil for 20 to 30 minutes until cooked through, while slices will take approximately 6 to 8 minutes. Whole rutabagas will take roughly 25 to 35 minutes to cook in boiling water, while slices of rutabagas will take 7 to 10 minutes. **Microwaving:** Place one pound of either turnips or rutabagas in a microwavable baking dish, cover with 3 tablespoons of liquid. After cooking for about 4 minutes, take out and stir. Continue cooking for 3 to 5 minutes or until tender. **Stir-frying:** Add thinly sliced turnips or rutabagas to stir-fry. Total cooking time is 6 to 7 minutes.

Eat well to be well!