

# Seasonal Vegetables

Healthy foods to warm you in winter

by nancy nichols

As the days grow shorter and the thermometer continues to drop, you may notice your body craving warm, nutritious foods.

**Turnips** have sustained people since ancient times. They're best when small — 2 inches in diameter or less.



Fortunately, seasonal vegetables are the perfect way to add color, variety and nutrients to your winter meals. From parsnips to winter squash, cold-season produce includes many unfamiliar yet incredibly nutritious and delicious foods.

"Traditional winter vegetables are cold-season crops and those that were stored in root cellars for use all winter long," says Dianne Moeller, registered dietitian at the Health District of Northern Larimer County. "They're the forgotten vegetables that at one time sustained people through hard winters."

**Rutabaga**, also known as "swede" or yellow turnip, is the result of a cross between a turnip and a cabbage. It has a smooth, yellow-orange flesh that's sweet and flavorful.



**Celery root**, also known as celeriac, is a delicious ivory-fleshed alternative to potatoes and other starches. It's fabulous boiled, roasted, in soups or even raw in salads.



Included among them are root vegetables, which are plentiful this time of year and easy to store and prepare. Think beets, carrots, parsnips, rutabaga, turnips and celery root (celeriac) when you're planning winter stews, soups and casseroles. In fact, some people find these foods so tasty that

simple roasting or steaming is enough to create a wonderful, colorful dish. Many of these vegetables also work well raw — julienned or diced in salads.

And you can't forget winter squash. Native to the Americas, this traditional food, available in wonderful variety, is an absolute must for winter recipes.

**Parsnips** are shaped like carrots with a pale, cream-colored skin and a sweet, nutty flavor.



Here are some of the varieties of squash you'll find locally: acorn, banana, buttercup, butternut, delicata, Hokkaido pumpkin, Hubbard, pumpkin, spaghetti, and turban. These are available in many supermarkets and at the winter farmer's market in Fort Collins (see sidebar).

Winter squash are harvested in the autumn, and most varieties, if kept in cool temperatures (50 to 55 degrees), can be stored throughout the winter without canning or freezing. Squash meat is multifaceted, lending itself to savory, succulent or sweet preparations. Use it in every

course of a meal: pureed in a soup, chunked in a stew, stuffed with grains as an entree, or as a main ingredient in pies, cookies and breads.

Rounding out the winter vegetable options are Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and greens (kale,

**Beets** come in a variety of shapes and colors, including the traditional red beet shown here. Variations include baby beets, Chioggia (ringed) beets and golden beets.



collards, Swiss chard and the like).

"You can't go wrong using as many of these traditional foods as possible," Moeller says. "Some things our ancestors definitely got right — including winter vegetables."

When selecting **Brussels sprouts**, look for small sprouts with tight heads. Small sprouts are more tender, and the tight heads help indicate freshness.



## Fort Collins Winter Farmer's Market

Although we're past the main growing season, that doesn't mean farmers have gone away. Our local farmers are still with us, and they're offering up a wonderful selection of winter fare for those who just can't get enough locally grown foods.

The Fort Collins Winter Farmer's Market features 40 vendors selling late-season produce, grass-fed meats, eggs, mushrooms, cheese, wine, salsas and sauces, baked goods and sweets. The event runs November–March and is sponsored by the Northern Colorado Food Incubator and Be Local Northern Colorado.

Check it out, and keep cooking seasonal, locally grown foods for best health.

### Winter Farmer's Market

Opera Galleria  
123 North College Ave.  
10 a.m.–3 p.m. on select Saturdays  
Upcoming dates: Dec. 12, Dec. 19, Jan. 16, Jan. 23, Feb. 13, Feb. 27, March 6, March 27

For more information, including a full listing of vendors, go online to [www.nocofoodincubator.com](http://www.nocofoodincubator.com) or call 231-1197.

## Serving suggestions

- Small chunks of squash and root vegetables are a great addition to soups and stews, pot roasts or braised dishes of any kind.
- Pureed squash and root-vegetable soups are thick, creamy and satisfying, either sweet or savory.
- Try grated raw winter squash, beets and roots; use them in coleslaw, grated carrot salad, green salad or wraps.
- Mashed winter vegetables make a great introductory baby food. Babies seem to love the texture and taste of many of these traditional foods.