

Rutabaga

If you've never heard of a rutabaga before, maybe you've heard of a Swede? That's because this hearty root vegetable was first cultivated in the colder climates of Scandinavia and Sweden, and only later gained prominence in America.

But this beta-carotene and vitamin C rich vegetable should not wait to gain prominence at your dinner table! A member of the brassica and cruciferous vegetable family, rutabagas offer a good form of soluble fiber along with a variety of antioxidants, anti-microbial compounds and anti-cancer properties, such as sulforaphane and selenium. Additionally, rutabagas are recommended for those monitoring their blood-sugar, since they contain less sugar and starch than other root vegetables and tubers.

Instead of masked potatoes, try **mashed rutabaga!** These vegetables have a light yellow color when you buy them in the store, but cook up bright orange. **Just peel, boil and mash---and maybe add some roasted garlic, sea salt and olive oil for a tasty side dish the whole family (and guests) will love.** You'll wow them with your culinary adventurousness in choosing the unique rutabaga over the conventional and boring potato!

As we move into the winter season, rutabagas are a great addition to soups for their earthy and sweet flavor as well as their pleasing orange color. I also love serving a **roasted vegetable dish by tossing chopped rutabagas, turnips, leeks, brussel spouts, butternut squash and fresh sage together with some sea salt and olive oil, and roasting in the oven for about an hour.** Its delicious, hearty and one of my family's favorite holiday dishes!

Just be sure to serve your rutabagas cooked (in stews, soups, casseroles, etc.) since heat and cooking deactivates the goitrogens present in all raw brassica-family vegetables. I hope you learn to enjoy rutabagas this holiday season, and that you bring in the New Year armed with some new, healthy and delicious rutabaga recipes!

Rutabaga Fries **By Chef Bobo**

- Preheat oven to 475 degrees F.
- Rutabagas must be peeled -- after they are peeled, slice them into a "french fry" shape.
- Toss the rutabaga fries in corn oil or canola oil, and salt and pepper generously. (NOTE FROM KAREN: To upgrade this health-wise, I would use coconut oil)
- Spread the fries out on a sheet pan that has been lined with parchment paper or aluminum foil.
- Roast until golden brown and cooked all the way through.

Note: Rutabagas and other root vegetables have more sugars in them than Idaho or russet potatoes and thus tend to caramelize faster. So when cooking the rutabaga fries, watch them carefully -- if they tend to get too dark too fast, turn the oven down to about 375 or 400 degrees F.

"You can use this cooking method for any type of root vegetable, and kids tend to love them," Chef Bobo says. "We have used it on rutabagas, turnips, parsnips, carrots, celeriac and sweet potatoes."