**EN on Foods**

**Be Thankful for Turnips: November Nutrition**

**The Folklore.** The turnip at one time was hailed as the vegetable of nobility, while other times it was considered food fit only for the poor. Potatoes brought to Europe from the New World bumped turnips off the dinner table. This Thanksgiving, it's time to bring them back.

**The Facts.** Turnips are root vegetables, bulbous in shape and white in color with a purple top, though some varieties are yellow-hued. Known as *Brassica rapa*, the turnip is a cruciferous vegetable, a member of the mustard green family and related to cabbage and cauliflower. In fact, Chinese cabbage is a variety of *B. rapa* that was developed to be a leaf vegetable. The turnip adapts well to challenging growing conditions, including frost. This, plus a hardy storage capability, explains its historical popularity at a time when food scarcity during the winter was an annual reality.

**The Findings.** The turnip root hosts only a modest showing of traditional nutrients, most notably vitamin C, but also potassium and fiber. The pungent leafy turnip greens, however, are brimming with vitamins A and K, as well as vitamin C and folate plus the antioxidants beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin. The last two carotenoids have shown promise in helping combat the eye conditions of macular degeneration and cataracts.

Like broccoli and cabbage, fellow members of the *Brassica* family, turnips may act against several cancers, such as those of the colon, lung, prostate and stomach. Laboratory studies show that a natural compound in cruciferous vegetables induces the death of cancer cells.

**The Finer Points.** Though available year-round, the peak season for turnips runs from October through March. Choose smaller turnips that feel heavy for their size; those larger than three inches in diameter can be tough and woody. Also avoid bruised or cut pieces; that may be a sign of excessive time in storage.

To prepare turnips, trim tops and roots and peel the waxy coat. Serve young turnips raw—shredded as a substitute for cabbage in coleslaw or sliced and served with other raw vegetables and a bean dip. Dice or slice turnips and boil for six to eight minutes, then mash. Steaming whole turnips takes 15 to 30 minutes, depending on their size. Be careful not to overcook them or they will develop a strong, bitter taste and will lose vitamin C.

Wash turnip greens well in cold water to remove any grit. Sauté or steam them for a pungent side dish or nutritious addition to a hearty soup.

--- Catherine Golub, M.S., R.D.

**Notable Nutrients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1/2 cup cooked, mashed turnips:</th>
<th>1/2 cup cooked turnip greens:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14 (12% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiber</td>
<td>2.3 grams (9% DV)</td>
<td>2.5 grams (10% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>13 grams (22% DV)</td>
<td>3.1 milligrams (12% DV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>204 milligrams (6% DV)</td>
<td>265 micrograms (331% DV)</td>
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**Sautéed Turnips with Spinach and Raisins**

2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 clove minced garlic  
3 medium turnips, peeled and cut into matchsticks

1/2 cup raisins  
3 tablespoons juice from a fresh lemon  
10 ounces fresh spinach, coarsely chopped Freshly ground nutmeg Salt and pepper to taste

1. Heat oil and garlic in sauté pan, being careful not to let it burn.  
2. Add turnips and raisins and cook for one minute.  
3. Add lemon juice, cover and cook for three more minutes.  
5. Sprinkle with nutmeg and pepper.

**Nutrition Information Per 1/2-cup Serving:**  
151 calories, 3 grams protein, 7 grams fat, 18 grams carbohydrate, 28 milligrams vitamin C, 95 milligrams calcium, 3 grams fiber.

--- Recipe courtesy of International Vegetarian Union.

**Research Roundup**

- **Drinking one cup a day of filtered, brewed coffee helps protect low-density lipoproteins (LDLs) from oxidation.** (Oxidized LDLs, the "bad" cholesterol, play a key role in the development of atherosclerosis, when arteries become clogged.) Those were the findings of Italian researchers who studied the effects of a single cup of coffee in 10 healthy men and women who were regular coffee drinkers. The researchers suggest that the benefits were likely the result of natural compounds in coffee, including caffeic, p-coumaric and ferulic acids.


- **People diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease live almost four years longer, on average, if they closely follow the Mediterranean way of eating** than if they don't, according to research from Columbia University Medical Center in New York City. The traditional Mediterranean diet pattern includes mostly vegetables, legumes, fruits, cereal, olive oil, fish, dairy and moderate daily intake of alcohol—typically wine.

  *Neurology, September 11, 2007.*

- **Higher blood levels of the B vitamin folate are linked with significantly better, faster thought processing in older people.** Those are the findings from the Rotterdam Scan Study from the Netherlands, which studied 1,033 men and women aged 60 to 90. Researchers analyzed blood levels of folate and compared that to an evaluation of each the participant's cognitive function with neuropsychological tests and brain scans. The researchers concluded that folate benefited cognitive function by improving vascular function.


**In Coming Issues**

- **EN Reports from Tea Symposium.** New findings on tea and health.
- **Triglycerides.** How important are they to your heart health?
- **The Lure of 100-Calorie Snacks.** Helpful, but also costly and wasteful.
- **Resistant Starch.** What it is, why it's good and where to get it.
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