

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Rutabagas

Now that it's almost Fall, at least further north than mid-Florida, you're likely to start seeing the Fall vegetables in the stores again. Of course that includes pumpkins for Halloween. There are other varieties of winter squash too, from blue to white. There may be turnips. And parsnips, the ones that look like white carrots. And then there are rutabagas. They may be the big round purple root things that you look at on the counter and wonder "What is that?!" If you've never tried them, why not make this the month to do it!

Rutabagas are also known as Swedes, because were brought to the Americas by early Swedish settlers. Probably those early varieties were more fibrous and less tasty than our present varieties. Today's rutabagas are so different that some people call them Canadian rutabagas, to distinguish them from the old ones. That might give you the idea that today's also taste a lot better than any elderly relatives have told you about!

A rutabaga resembles a huge turnip or radish. It's round and fat, with stems for the leaves coming out of the top, and a pointy root coming out of the bottom. The top part is usually a deep purple, and the lower part is golden blond to white. But don't expect a purple vegetable, because inside they're golden to white the whole way through.

They're grown mostly in Canada and shipped across the US. The harvest is in the Fall, which is why you're more likely to see them now. Because they're shipped so far they are often dipped in wax. That helps keep them from drying out and getting soft. It also protects them from mold. You'll peel the wax off when you remove the skin. Don't buy one that has soft spots on it.

Depending on how they're cooked, rutabagas could be mushy and bland. But if they're prepared right they're as good as potatoes. And with fewer than half the calories for the same amount, that's a good deal. They also have about 3 times as much vitamin C as a potato, even after they're boiled. They are a surprisingly good source of calcium, especially for a vegetable. With 82 mg in a cup of boiled rutabaga, that's almost three times as much as a cup of spinach salad.

They don't have a lot of flavor of their own, so they are a great addition to many stews. Or they

can be cubed and baked with winter squash, garlic and olive oil for a tasty casserole. By themselves, they can be boiled and served with butter and salt. Or they can be sliced, cubed or cut in strips then boiled and baked, or even made into a pie! Rutabaga cubes usually hold their shape better than potatoes when boiled. So they can be mixed into a salad with other blanched vegetables and not make everything white.

A fresh rutabaga will keep for about a month in the crisper drawer of a refrigerator. If you get one that has been waxed it will last for three months or longer. After that, if you still haven't used it, you can freeze it. And unlike many vegetables, rutabagas do not need to be blanched or boiled before freezing. Just cut it in cubes.

To cut a rutabaga, lay it on its side and slice the leaf end off. Then set it on the cut flat end and slice off one of the sides. You can now turn it on that flat side and slice the rest of it. Lay the flat slices down and use the tip of a paring knife to remove the skin and wax. Then cut in the size cubes your recipe calls for.

For plain rutabagas, cut the slices into half inch cubes. Use just enough water to cover them, and simmer them with a little salt until they're crisp-tender. It should only take 15 to 20 minutes. Drain, add salt, pepper and butter and you're ready to go. Or mash and season them like mashed potatoes.

Here's a sweeter way to serve them. Your family probably won't be able to guess what they are. Just let them guess until the dish is empty!

Glazed Rutabagas

1 large rutabaga	¼ cup margarine or butter
2 Tbsp brown sugar	1/8 tsp ground nutmeg (or cinnamon)
black pepper to taste (fresh ground is better)	

Slice rutabaga as described above, then cut into ¾ inch cubes. Cover with salted water and bring to boil. Boil 15 minutes until crisp-tender. Drain well. Add butter to hot rutabaga in pan. Sprinkle with brown sugar and continue to cook over moderate heat, stirring gently, until butter and sugar melt. Add nutmeg and pepper and serve immediately. Serves 6.

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