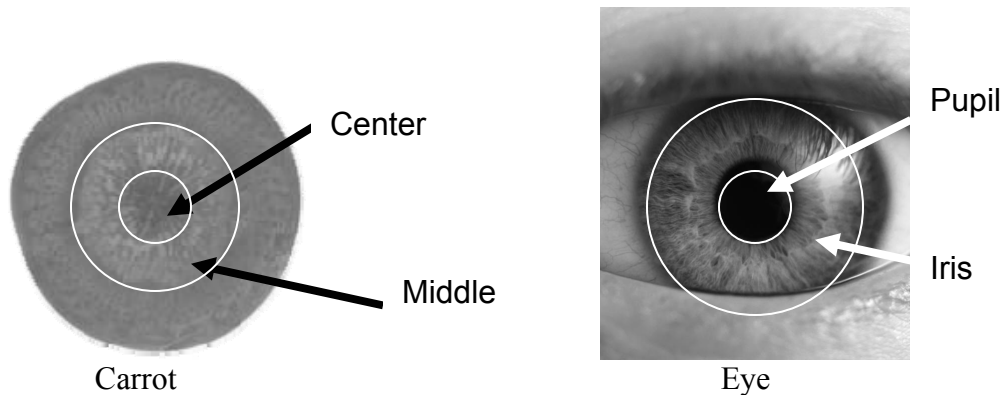


Carrots: More than it Meets the Eye  
By: Crystal L. Nguyen

Have you ever noticed that when you sliced a carrot, it looks like an eye? Look below.



Both have wavy lines and a dark centered circle. These similarities led scientists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to believe eating carrots promoted good eye health. During this time there was a theory about how shapes of plants could cure or heal a similar shape of a human body part. This theory was later adapted in the practice of homeopathy, a form of alternative medicine in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Current scientific research supports the vital role carrots play in vision and general eye health. Carrots are good sources of potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin C, and A. Foods with dietary fiber can help lower the risk of colon cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and improve digestion. Eating foods rich in vitamin A help keeps the immune system, heart, and skin healthy.

Besides the many health benefits of eating carrots, there is more to them than meets the eye. For example, carrots come in more colors than just orange. The familiar orange carrot we see today is a mutant of the yellow and red carrot, bred by Dutch scientists. The Greeks, Romans and Egyptians ate thin turnip-shaped white, pale yellow, red, purple, and black carrots. Until 2003, researchers of the United States Department of Agriculture's bred hybrid carrots with more vitamins and minerals from a rainbow of colors: white, yellow, red, deep orange, and purple. Each color has a distinct health benefit. For example, yellow carrots promote good vision and can lower the risk of lung cancer. Red carrots were bred to contain lycopene, also found in tomatoes, to fight heart disease and some cancers. Purple carrots have antioxidants to slow down



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and reduce cellular damage in our bodies. These colorful carrots may be hard to find in your local grocery store, but you can always grow them yourself for as little as \$1.99. Seeds are available on [www.burpee.com](http://www.burpee.com) (\$2.65 - \$3.50) and [www.tmseeds.com](http://www.tmseeds.com) (\$1.99 - \$2.95). If you do not have a green thumb or a place to grow them, try searching for them at your farmers' markets.

On the other hand, orange carrots are available year round. While at the store, choose carrots that are firm, smooth, and free of cracks on the skin. When stored properly, carrots can last up to a month. Wrap the carrots in a paper towel and place them in a bag in the refrigerator. The paper towel will help absorb the excess moisture and prevent them from rotting. If green leaves are still attached to the carrots, cut them off 2 inches above the crown. This will help keep them from drawing moisture out of the carrots. For better storage, put them away from apples and pears because they produce gases which cause other fruits and vegetables to ripen faster.

Feeling hungry? Clean carrots under cold running water with a vegetable brush to remove the dirt. Peeling the skin of the carrots can mean losing some of its health benefits, so decided to peel them, try not to over do it. Carrots can be eaten raw or cooked. Cooking carrots releases their natural sugar and makes them taste sweeter. This process makes it easier for your body to absorb, but overcooking them may result in loss of flavor and nutrients. If you are short on time, using canned carrots is a good choice. They almost have the same amount of vitamins and minerals as fresh or frozen carrots.

#### Quick Tips:

- Add chopped or shredded raw carrots to salads.
- Sauté carrots to add color to a meal.
- Add grated carrots to muffins or cake.
- Juice carrots for a delicious drink.
- Add carrots to sweeten soups, stock, or stews.

#### Quick & Easy Recipe: Vegetable Medley with Salsa Dip



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*1 cup vegetables and ½ cup salsa  
dip per serving.*

Makes 4 servings.

Prep time: 20 minutes

#### Ingredients

2 carrots, cut into 3-inch sticks

2 celery stalks, cut into  
3-inch sticks

½ jicama, peeled and cut into  
3-inch sticks

1 bunch radishes, trimmed

6 green onions, trimmed

1 cup fat free sour cream

1 cup pico de gallo

#### Preparation

1. Arrange vegetables on a platter.

2. In a small bowl, mix sour cream and pico de gallo.

#### Nutrition information per serving

Calories 109

Carbohydrate 22 g

Protein 6 g,

Total Fat 0 g

Saturated Fat 0 g

Cholesterol 2 mg

Sodium 247 mg

Dietary Fiber 7g

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