



# SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

## Turnips & Rutabagas

Although turnips and rutabagas are frequently lumped together in one category, botanically they are different. Turnips, members of the mustard family, have been around since ancient times; rutabagas (or swede turnips) came along in the 1700s, originating in Scandinavia. Most turnips have white flesh and purple crowns, hairy leaves, a medium-grained texture, and rapid growth. They have a higher water content than rutabagas, so they do not store well.

Rutabagas, have a yellow-orange color, large fleshy leaves, and a smooth, dense texture; they mature over a long period of time and can be stored. Their large roots are high in Vitamin A and are sweeter and stronger-flavored than turnips.

**Marketing:** Both turnips and rutabagas should be firm—any wrinkling is a sign they have lost moisture and will have a spongy texture. Pass by larger turnips—they are likely to be pithy or bitter—and select young ones, which are frequently sold in bunches with their greens. The greens should look fresh; do not throw out—save them for soups or greens. Rutabagas, most frequently sold trimmed, should feel heavy and look unblemished. They are usually waxed to prevent dehydration, a practice not necessary for the home gardener.

**Storage and Preserving:** Turnips deteriorate rapidly. Separate leaves from roots. Whole roots will hold no longer than 1 week in the refrigerator. Green turnip tops will keep 2-4 days in the refrigerator. Refrigerate rutabagas for 3-4 weeks.

**Nutritional Information:** The most significant nutrient for both turnips and rutabagas is Vitamin A. Other nutrients include Vitamin C, Potassium and Phosphorous.

- Yields:**
- 1 pound trimmed turnips or rutabagas = 4 cups chopped
  - 1 pound trimmed turnips or rutabagas = 4 cups grated
  - 1 pound trimmed turnips or rutabagas = 2 cups mashed

- Hints:**
- If turnips are large or old, blanch in boiling water for 4-5 minutes to remove strong or bitter flavor.
  - Eat raw turnips like radishes, or add to appetizer platters.
  - Accompany roast meats with braised young turnips.
  - Add turnip or rutabaga chunks to stews. As they absorb meat juices or fats, their flavor becomes richer.
  - Puree to serve alone or use as base for cream soup.
  - Stuff a pork loin with chunks of rutabaga, apples, and prunes.
  - Grate raw in salads.
  - Make tiny ovals the size of green olives to garnish a clear soup.
  - Make a salad. Slice young turnips, blanch in stock until barely tender and toss in vinaigrette sauce.



### Steamed Turnip or Rutabaga

Boil 1 inch of water in a steamer. Put rutabaga or turnip in basket or colander and steam as follows, remembering timing is approximate and depends on the age and size of the vegetables.

- *White turnip:* ½-inch cubes take 12-15 minutes; 1-1 ½-inch whole turnips take 20-25 minutes.
- *Rutabaga:* ½-inch cubes take 20-25 minutes; 1-1 ½-inch whole ovals take 30 minutes.

### Boiled Turnip or Rutabaga

Bring a saucepan of water to a boil and drop in turnips or rutabagas; tender young vegetables will take less time.

- *White turnip:* ½-inch pieces take 5-8 minutes; 1-1 ½-inch whole turnips take 15-20 minutes.
- *Rutabaga:* ½-inch cubes take 20-25 minutes; 1-1 ½-inch whole ovals take 30 minutes

### Finishing Touches for Steamed or Boiled Turnip and Rutabaga

- In Butter: Prepare as above and roll in melted butter. Season with salt and pepper and decorate with fresh herbs.
- In Cream Sauce: Make a cream sauce with 2 ½ tablespoons butter and 3 tablespoons flour, 1 ½ cups cooking liquid, and ½ cup milk or light cream (or all milk). Season and fold cooked turnips or rutabagas into sauce and reheat. Add bread crumbs or cheese sauce if desired.

### Baby Turnips and Greens

16 small (1-inch) turnips with greens  
5 tablespoons butter  
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Cut leaves from turnips, trim, wash well, and dry. Cut large leaves into thin diagonal slices. Peel turnips, if desired, then melt 3 tablespoons butter in a sauté pan for 5-6 minutes until lightly browned all over. Lower heat, cover, and cook until tender but still crisp, 5-8 minutes; season to taste. The time depends on the size of the turnips, but watch carefully, for they may cook faster. Remove and keep warm. Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in pan, add greens, and stir to coat with butter and to wilt, 3-5 minutes. Season to taste and serve with turnips and greens arranged side by side or with turnips covering the greens. (Serves 4)

### Old-Fashioned Scalloped Turnips

The old-fashioned way of fixing scalloped potatoes is simply to layer with butter, flour, and milk.

4 tablespoons butter  
½ cup thinly sliced onions  
4 cups peeled, sliced turnips  
2 tablespoons flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
Freshly ground pepper  
1 cup milk  
½ cup light cream

Butter a 1-quart casserole. Melt 1 tablespoon butter and lightly sauté onions until just wilted. Layer a third of the sliced turnips in a casserole, top with a third of the onion, sprinkle with 2 teaspoons flour and ⅓ teaspoon salt, and grind on some pepper; pat with 1 tablespoon butter. Repeat this layering twice. Mix milk and cream together and pour over turnips. Cover and bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for 30 minutes, then remove cover and bake for another 30-35 minutes, or until tender and bubbly. (Serves 4)

- *Turnips au Gratin:* Cover with ¾ cup grated cheese.

Source: *The Victory Garden Cookbook, Joy of Cooking.*

### Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being

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