



Using, Storing and Preserving



Rutabagas

Michigan-grown rutabagas are available late September through November.

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Recommended varieties

American Purple Top, Thomson Laurentian and Joan

Interesting facts

- Rutabaga belongs to the Cruciferae or mustard family and the genus *Brassica*, classified as *Brassica napobrassica*.
- Developed during the Middle Ages, rutabagas are thought to be a cross between the turnip and the cabbage.
- The rutabaga is an excellent source of vitamin C and potassium, and a good source for fiber, thiamin, vitamin B6, calcium, magnesium, vitamin A and manganese.
- Similar to the turnip but sweeter, rutabagas are inexpensive and low in calories.

Tips for buying, preparing and harvesting

- Look for smooth, firm vegetables with a round shape. Avoid rutabagas with punctures, deep cuts, cracks or signs of decay. They usually are trimmed of taproots and tops before they are sold to the public.



- Use rutabagas in soups or stew, or bake, boil or steam and slice or mash as a side dish. Lightly stir-fry or eat raw in salads. Rutabaga is traditional in Michigan pasties, along with potatoes, carrots and beef.
- Harvest when they reach the size of a softball. You may harvest rutabagas as they reach edible size and throughout the season since they will keep in the ground.

Storage and food safety

- Wash hands before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Rutabagas will keep for months in a cool storage place. They store well in plastic bags in a refrigerator or cold cellar.
- Keep rutabagas away from raw meat and meat juices to prevent cross contamination.
- Before peeling, wash rutabagas using cool or slightly warm water and a vegetable brush.

Lawn or garden questions?

Visit migarden.msu.edu.
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How to preserve

Preparation: Select young, medium-sized rutabagas. Cut off tops, wash using cool water and a vegetable brush, and peel.

Canning

Rutabagas are best frozen. Canned rutabagas usually discolor and develop a strong flavor.

Freezing

Freeze by cutting into cubes and water blanch for 3 minutes. Cool, drain and pack into freezer containers or freezer bags, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Label and place in a 0 °F freezer.

Recipes

Baked rutabagas

Place 1 to 3 pounds quartered and peeled rutabagas in a shallow baking dish. Cover and bake in a 350 °F oven until tender, usually 40 to 50 minutes. Mix with carrots and parsnips for a great fall bake.

Sources

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