

The DISH



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It's been a really long time since I've planted carrots and beets. It's not that I don't like them, but I always hated having to thin them out and then they'd grow crazy or not at all or critters would come and feast on what happened to grow.

So this year, since I have everything fenced in, I thought I'd give it a shot again. But I did something a little different. I repurposed some 20-30 gallon heavy plastic tubs that had minerals in them for our cows. After they were empty, I filled them with potting soil and planted one with carrot seeds and one with beet seeds.

I just harvested them and am actually very pleased at how easy it was and how good they taste! So, I've been on the hunt for some easy ways to enjoy them, so I thought I'd share:

Crack Carrots

2 lbs. baby carrots
3 tsp. ranch seasoning dry powder
1 tsp. garlic powder
½ tsp. black pepper
3½ Tbsp. vegetable oil
2 Tbsp. fresh parsley (or 1 Tbsp. dried parsley flakes)
1 Tbsp. fresh chives, chopped
Salt to taste

Prepare a large rimmed sheet pan with foil and lightly grease with oil.

In a medium mixing bowl, mix together ranch seasoning, garlic powder, pepper, salt and 1 Tbsp. of chopped parsley. Stir in oil. Stir in baby carrots and toss until mixed well.

Place on pan and bake in 400 degree oven for 25-35 minutes. Serve roasted carrots on a platter and top with chopped parsley and chives.

Healthy Carrot Cake Baked Oatmeal

2 cups rolled oats
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. ginger
¼ tsp. salt
1¾ cups almond milk
2 eggs
1/3 cup pure maple syrup
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
¾ cup shredded carrots
½ cup raisins
½ cup chopped pecans (or other nut)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees and grease an 8-by-8-inch casserole dish.

In a large bowl, mix together the rolled oats, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger and salt.

In a medium bowl, stir together the almond milk, eggs, maple syrup and vanilla. Add in the carrots and half of both the raisins and pecans.

Add the wet mixture to dry mixture and stir until combined. Pour mixture into baking dish and press down to make sure oats are soaked. Sprinkle on the rest of the raisins and pecans and press down lightly

again.

Bake, uncovered, for around 40-45 minutes, until lightly golden brown. Let cool for 5 minutes and then serve. Store in refrigerator.

Cheesy Carrot Casserole

½ cup butter
½ cup medium onion
¼ cup flour
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. dry mustard
¼ tsp. pepper
2 cups milk
1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
2 lbs. baby carrots or 12 large carrots, sliced into bite-sized pieces
1 cup plain bread crumbs or Ritz crackers

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9-by-13-inch casserole dish and set aside.

Steam carrots until halfway cooked. You want them to be soft enough to bite but still with a bit of a crunch. They'll finish cooking in the oven.

As carrots are steaming, in a saucepan combine butter and onion. Cook until onions are soft and translucent.

Add flour, salt, mustard and pepper and mix well to create a paste.

Slowly add ¼ cup of milk at a time, whisking continually, until all the milk has been added to pan. You are making a basic roux. The mixture will thicken quite a bit at first but slowly thin out. If you add all the milk at once you'll have a clumpy mess, so only add ¼ cup at a time, whisking well. Cook for 5 minutes then turn off burner and add cheese. Mix well until cheese is melted and combined.

When carrots are cooked halfway, place carrots on the bottom of the casserole dish. Pour cheese mixture on top of carrots ensuring to cover carrots completely. Sprinkle bread crumbs or crushed Ritz crackers on top of sauce and bake for 25 minutes. Remove from oven and serve immediately.

Oven Baked Beet Chips

12 beets — red, golden or mixed
½ cup olive oil
2 tsp. celery salt or sea salt

Preheat oven to 300 degrees and line several baking sheets with parchment paper. Scrub the beets well with a veggie brush and cut off the tops.

Use a mandolin slicer to slice the beets paper thin (1/16 inch). When the beet slices are this thin, there is no need to peel them first. Hold the root end while dragging the beets across the mandolin and watch your fingertips closely.

Place the beet slices in a large bowl and pour the oil and salt over the top. Toss well. (If using red and golden beets, place in separate bowls and divide the oil and salt evenly.) Now let the beets sit in the oil and salt until they release their natural juices, about 15-20 minutes. This is what allows them to retain a better shape and color.

Toss the beets again, then drain off the liquid. Lay the slices out in a single layer on the prepared baking sheets. Bake for 45-60 minutes until crisp, but not brown. Test after 45 minutes and only bake longer if necessary. Remove the beet chips from the oven and cool completely before storing in an air-tight container.

Refrigerator Pickled Beets

2 lbs. fresh beets
¾ cups red wine vinegar
½ cup sugar or honey
½ cup water, filtered
½ large red onion

Trim the top stem to roughly 1 inch and thoroughly wash your beets.

Place washed beets in a large pot of water and boil for roughly 20 minutes or until tender (just like boiling potatoes, the larger beets will take longer to cook). Strain cooked beets in a colander and cool your beets by running cold water over them.

When your beets are cool enough to safely handle, with your faucet running cold water, use your hands to slip the skin off the beets. Trim the remaining stems and root to be flush with the beet bulb. Cut or slice cooked beets as desired.

To make pickled beets: Combine vinegar, sugar or honey, and water in a small sauce pan. Heat to dissolve sugar. Remove from heat and set aside.

In glass jar(s) or container(s) with a tight fitting lid, layer cut up beets and sliced onion. Pour vinegar/sugar/water over top. Add additional water if needed to fully submerge the beets in the liquid.

Cover with a tight fitting lid and place in the refrigerator for 5-7 days before enjoying. Refrigerator pickled beets will keep for about 2 months.