



Carrot and Parsnip Soup with Ginger

By Chris Duke

Anna's Gourmet Goodies



It's funny how you remember those pearls of wisdom that your mom and dad repeated as you were growing up – sometimes over and over again. Often without consciously thinking about it, I find myself repeating them to my daughter, especially when it comes to food. We've been working hard lately to extol the benefits of a balanced diet of fruits and vegetables.

“Carrots are good for your eyes”, Mom used to say. “Rabbits love carrots, and you've never ever seen a rabbit wearing glasses, have you?” As a young child, how can you argue with that logic?

As it turns out, Mom was right on the money with this recommendation. Carrots are packed with beta-carotene, an antioxidant that produces Vitamin A. Vitamin A is used to form a pigment called rhodopsin that is necessary for night vision. Beta-carotene has also been shown to combat macular degeneration and cataracts. And unlike some vegetables, cooking actually helps release more of the beta-carotene.

Parsnips are less popular in this country, but like carrots, they are a member of the umbelliferae family and are rich in cancer-fighting phytonutrients. The antioxidants in carrots and parsnips have also been shown to help prevent heart disease and may play a role in helping to regulate blood sugar. Parsnips have a subtle sweet flavor and are excellent by themselves, or paired with carrots.

While it's unlikely that young children will be the least bit interested in any of this, we did manage to get a good response to this recipe. It's fairly easy to make and can be a hearty meal or a colorful and elegant appetizer.

Carrot and Parsnip Soup with Fresh Ginger

1 lb carrots
1 lb parsnips
1 ½ cups chopped onion
2 cloves garlic
1 tbsp minced ginger
2 tbsp honey

2 ½ cups vegetable stock
½ cup heavy cream
Extra virgin olive oil
Salt
White pepper
Red bell pepper
Fresh cilantro

Wash the carrots and parsnips and peel. Unless you are buying organic vegetables, root veggies should always be peeled. Slice into thin strips and cut into ½” pieces. Peel and chop the onion. Peel the garlic and either mince very fine, or push through a garlic press to add to the soup.

Fresh ginger is readily available most everywhere. Wash and peel away the light brown skin. Then mince fine or use a grater.

Heat a stockpot, and then coat the bottom with olive oil. Add the onions and sauté until they just start to turn translucent – don’t brown them! Add the garlic, ginger, carrots and parsnips. Sauté for 3-4 minutes until all vegetables are coated and start to get tender. Season with salt and pepper. Add the vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to a simmer, add the cream, and stir.

Continue to simmer over low heat for about 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Remove from the heat, and allow the soup to cool for a few minutes.

You’ll need to puree the soup in either a blender, a food processor, or by using a hand held blender. *(If you have not tried one of these yet – it is definitely worth treating yourself. We picked up a Braun at Linen’s and Things for \$19.95 and it makes quick work of puréeing cooked vegetables in the pot.)*

Blend the soup until smooth, and return to the stockpot. The soup should be thick, but you can adjust it with more stock if necessary. Add the honey and stir until blended, then check the salt and pepper – adjust to taste.

Cut the red pepper in half and remove the core and seeds. Slice into thin strips. Ladle the soup into a bowl and float strips of the red pepper on top. Garnish with the cilantro. I baked up some whole wheat and cornmeal muffins to go with the soup for a healthy addition to this already vitamin packed meal.

Bon Appetit!