



## Even in Winter **GRILLED VEGETABLES**

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*By Deidra Darsa*

**I**n mild-winter regions, fresh winter vegetables, grown with care and uniquely prepared, make some of the finest meals. While many folks look to their local grocer or farmer for these scrumptious items, those who grow their own find the flavor of their grilled produce especially sweet.

"Anyone can grow vegetables in their backyard with space and plenty of sunlight," says Virginia Farm Bureau Communications Director Greg Hicks. "They're much tastier when they're fresh."

Before planting vegetables, those living in the suburbs will have to add to the soil what development took away. "If you live in a neighborhood development, you can be sure that the top soil was bulldozed away during construction, leaving you with inadequate soil," explains Hicks. That can be remedied by adding an organic fertilizer, compost or other top soil. Once you've gotten the soil ready and planted your vegetables, make sure to water evenly and deeply, down to the root, especially during a dry spell.

For those interested in growing winter vegetables, try leeks, beets, broccoli or carrots. "Most vegetables need a sandy soil," says Freeman Barsotti of the family-owned Farm Fresh to You from Capay, California ([www.farmfreshtoyou.com](http://www.farmfreshtoyou.com)). "They don't do well in heavy clay soils." As an organic farmer, Barsotti recommends watering a weedy garden, letting the weeds grow and then killing them by hoeing. "Then seed the carrots. Hopefully, there won't be as many

weeds, but if you didn't get rid of all the weeds, both will grow at the same time."

Once grown, those carrots and other freshly grown vegetables can be deliciously prepared on the grill. Outdoor chef and Weber cookbook author Jamie Purveyance says carrots are his favorite grilled vegetable. "If they're large, they're easy to do on the grill grate, but if they're baby carrots, I use the Weber vegetable basket for grilling," he says. "What I like about it is the fact that it conducts heat the way a grill grate does. For instance, if you tried to grill a bunch of mushrooms on a standard grill grate, they'd fall through, but you can grill them using a vegetable basket and get the same results without losing any. However, if you're going to use this basket, preheat it for 5 minutes or so. That will make a big difference on how it cooks."

Woks and tumble baskets—all grilling accessories—make cooking vegetables outdoors a fun experience. "We have some really cool items," says Ted Scott, Napoleon Grills national sales manager. "One of our most popular is a round wok topper. It's a non-stick basket that's great for grilling all sorts of mixed vegetables."

Napoleon's tumble basket is designed to go on a grill rotisserie, and although designed for meatballs and chicken wings, it's great for potatoes, notes Scott, who cautions grillers not to overcook their vegetables. He recommends grilling vegetables over high heat for short periods of time to lock in crispness and flavor. "You



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don't want to cook vegetables low-and-slow because they lose color and nutrition," he says.

Another favorite is cedar planking. Traditionally used to cook fish, cedar planking with chilled mashed potatoes makes for an excellent shepherd's pie. "You put the mashed potatoes on cedar plank, and grill for 20 minutes," explains Scott. "As they start to brown, add butter and drizzle other types of marinades and vegetables. Top with sliced tomatoes in the last 10 minutes to garnish. It's all about the imagination."

For purists, food stylist and chef Camille Renk suggests cutting fresh vegetables into large pieces so they can go directly onto the grill. "It's always nice to consider cutting them into different shapes," says Renk. "For instance, cut squash lengthwise to make a platter more interesting."

Mix herbs and garlic in olive oil and lightly coat red or white onions, fennel, squash, eggplants and radicchio with the mix before grilling. This adds flavor and prevents the vegetables from sticking, notes Renk. "As long as you cut your pieces big enough, you get those great grill marks." Once it's been grilled to perfection, place a butternut squash into a Fire Magic grill professional blender, add some chicken stock and your favorite spices to make a great hearty soup, says Elaine Remy, Fire Magic Grills spokesperson. These blenders are built into the grill island and make for a handy addition to the outside grilling experience. "You can grill any vegetable, puree it in the blender and make a great soup," says Remy.

From garden to grill and throughout the year, vegetables make a delightful addition to your garden and outdoor menu. ♦



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## Grilled Carrots Recipe



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Prep time: 10 minutes  
Grilling time: 3 to 5 minutes  
Makes 4 servings

- 8 medium carrots, each 6 to 8 inches long and about 1 inch wide at the stem
  - 1/4 cup unsalted butter
  - 1/2 teaspoon red wine vinegar
  - 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
  - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
  - 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
  - 1 teaspoon minced fresh Italian parsley
1. Peel the carrots and cook them in boiling water until they are partially cooked but still crisp, 4 to 6 minutes. Drain the carrots and rinse them under cold water for at least 10 seconds to stop the cooking.
  2. Fill a Weber® RapidFire® chimney starter to the rim with charcoal briquettes and burn them until they are lightly covered with ash. Spread the charcoal in a tightly packed, single layer across one-half of the charcoal grate. Put the cooking grate in place, close the lid, and pre-heat the grill for about 10 minutes. Leave all the vents open.
  3. Lay the carrots flat on a work surface. In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter with the vinegar and nutmeg. Brush the carrots with about half the butter mixture and season with half the salt and pepper.
  4. Brush the cooking grate clean. Grill the carrots over direct high heat, with the lid open, until lightly charred with spots and stripes, 3 to 5 minutes, turning occasionally and swapping their positions as needed for even cooking. Move the carrots to a platter, brush them with the remaining butter mixture, and season them with the remaining salt and pepper. Sprinkle the parsley over the top. Serve warm.

*Deidra Darsa is the PR & media relations manager for the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association.*

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