

RECIPE for health

DECEMBER 2009 In partnership with Health4U and Culinary Services

Featured Food:

PARSNIPS



By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Can you dig it? During parsnips' peak season, hardly! Parsnips have bragging rights as the most durable of the winter vegetables and need a frost to sweeten up. In fact, the colder the temperature, the more the parsnip converts its starch to sugar.

Since parsnips keep so well in the ground or a root cellar, they are available fresh here in the north country from late fall until early spring. Look for long, firm roots with a smooth skin. Small parsnips are the most tender and medium-sized parsnips give the greatest yield, but don't pass up the largest ones. These whoppers will sometimes have a woody core which can simply be cut away, but the rest of the parsnip will be delicately sweet when cooked. Parsnips store best in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

This starchy root vegetable resembles an ivory-colored carrot. But unlike the carrot, it is nearly inedible raw. Its best flavor, sweet and nutty, develops when it is cooked. Prepare a parsnip the same as you would more familiar root vegetables — peel it like a carrot and cook it like a potato.

Roasted: Peel parsnips and cut into equal size chunks. Toss with vegetable oil, salt and pepper. Roast at 400°F for 20 to 30 minutes, turning once or twice to ensure an even browning.

Deep Fried: Peel and slice about 1/8-inch thick. Fry in peanut oil until golden brown. Drain on paper towels, salt and serve.

Mashed: Mix with pears as in the featured recipe or try three parts parsnips to one part potatoes. Peel vegetables and cut into pieces; make the potato chunks about half the size of the parsnip chunks. Cover with cold water and add one half to one teaspoon of salt. Simmer until tender. Put the vegetables through a ricer or food processor or smash by hand. Add warm buttermilk, milk, cream or broth, then beat until smooth. Add butter, salt and pepper to taste.

Parsnip and Pear Puree

Recipe tested by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Serves 6 – 8

- 2 lbs. (6 medium) parsnips, peeled and rough cut
- 12 oz. (2 medium) Bartlett pears, peeled and rough cut
- 4 oz. heavy cream, warm
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Salt to taste
- White pepper to taste

Cook the parsnips and pears separately in boiling salted water until they are tender enough to mash with a fork. Drain and then lightly dry in a warm oven over low heat until excess moisture has cooked away. Combine the pears and parsnips and puree them using a food processor.

As the processor is on, slowly add the warmed heavy cream to give the mixture a creamy and smooth texture. Stop the processor and then add the spices and the salt and white pepper to taste. Keep warm and serve right away.

This recipe will be served at The Gallery, Akers Dining, McDonel Dining, Wonders Dining, Brody Dining, Yakeley Dining and Shaw Dining on December 14.

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