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Getting to the root of the matter

This month we are focusing on root vegetables. In Belgium there are plenty of delicious and interesting root vegetables at this time of year.

Traditionally shunned by some as peasant fare or even animal fodder, root vegetables are back in fashion and rightfully so.

'Root vegetables' is a collective name for vegetables that are grown underground. This includes several different sub-groups, including tubers (potatoes), tuberous storage roots (sweet potatoes, cassava), taproots (parsnips, carrots) and bulbs (onions, garlic).

The health benefits of vegetables such as beetroot are now well known, and can be

seen in some of the best restaurants around Europe. Even The Fat Duck in the UK serves a beetroot jelly... more on beetroot later.

The farms that provide the root vegetables for our organic boxes come from mainly the Walloon region of Belgium. Many of the root vegetables still have soil on them, and this helps to store the vegetables for longer.

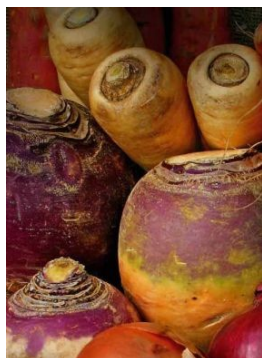
You can store root vegetables in a cold corner of a garage or shed, and a little frost can actually make them taste sweeter, as the starches convert to sugar. Clean the vegetables just before using to ensure they stay as fresh as possible.

Sometimes difficult to find in

supermarkets, there are many varieties of root vegetables and not just the ubiquitous potatoes and carrots. In this edition, we explore the health benefits and cooking possibilities of some of the more unusual varieties.

As it is nearly valentines day, we are featuring beetroot as the seasonal vegetable of the month. What has beetroot to do with valentines day? Well, in English folklore it states that if a man and a woman eat from the same beetroot, they will fall in love !!

By the way, we were hoping to begin our articles on individual Belgian producers this month, but we couldn't arrange it in time. So this will appear next time. *Thanks, Ben*



Improving our eco-performance

We are always attempting to improve our business, and as a young company, we take all feedback seriously. As a result of customer suggestions, we have decided to try to become a completely paperless operation in our administration.

In addition, as explained in the recent email, we are trying to reuse all possible packaging.

Another idea we currently are investigating is to calculate the food miles of each organic box and have an option to offset the food miles for each organic box.

We are also thinking about offering a new box option that has 100% Belgian produce every week.

If anybody has any comments or suggestions, please let us know.



The root vegetables in your box



- **Swede** (*Rutabaga in French and koolraap in Flemish*)

A cross between a cabbage and turnip it is known as rutabaga in US English. In Scotland, it is known as “neep”. Most likely the swede is native to Sweden and from there spread to Scotland, the rest of Europe and North America



Why? An excellent source of vitamin C, potassium and vitamin A. This means that 1 portion provides above 20% of the daily recommended amount of these vitamins.

Make: In Northern Europe, Swede is boiled and mashed with carrots and potatoes and mixed with cream or milk. This creates a puree and is called “rotmos” (root mash)



- **Parsnips** (*Panaïs in French and pastinaak in Flemish*)

Parsnips have been revered since ancient times and even the Romans enjoyed them cooked in honeyed wine. It has a delicate sweet flavor and are at their peak season in the autumn and winter.

Why? An excellent source of vitamin C and Folate, and a good source of potassium.

Make: Parsnips should be scrubbed just before cooking, and can be baked, sautéed, steamed, or boiled and mashed like potatoes. They are good alternative to carrots or potatoes. They lend a general sweetness to soups and other combinations of root vegetables.



- **Black Salsify** (*Salsifis in French and Haverwortel in Flemish*)

Black salsify is also known as Scorzonera hispanica, Spanish salsify, winter asparagus and even vipers grass. It is native to Southern Europe, and gets its name from the old French word ‘scorzon’ which means snake.

Why?

A good source of potassium, calcium, iron, sodium and vitamins A, B1, E and C. It is also a good source of fructose, so is particularly suitable for diabetics.

Make: The skin should be removed either before or after boiling. It is often used in a white sauce or eaten together with other vegetables. Boiled salsify roots may also be coated with batter and deep fried.



- **Black radish** (*Radis noir in French and Radijs in Flemish*)

Known also as Black Spanish, they date back to ancient Egypt. The flavor can be hot akin to horseradish and they are in peak season in the winter months.

Why? Black radish has many medicinal properties including being rich in vitamin C, B and sulfur. It has a high content of fibre and is good for digestion in general.

Make: These radish should be peeled and can be eaten raw. They are often grated and should be salted and add cream to balance the strong flavor. They can also be cooked in a similar way to turnips.

- **Turnips** (*Navet in French and raap in Flemish*)

There are several varieties of turnips, and we regularly include the purple and yellow types in the organic boxes. The origins are vague but they thrive in cold, damp climates. They have a sweet and slightly peppery flavor. They should be stored in a cool dry place.

Why? Turnips are high in fibre, Vitamin C, B6, Manganese, Folate, calcium and potassium.

Make: Often used in winter soups in Europe. The French tend to braise or sautee them and serve glazed with duck. The Italians use them in risottos and the Chinese roast them. In Asia, turnips are popular when pickled.



A reason to be seasonal: Beetroot

Beetroot is related to the sugar beet - and has one of the highest sugar contents of any vegetable. Up to 10 per cent of beetroot is sugar, but it is released slowly into the body rather than the sudden rush that results from eating chocolate. This is one of many reasons why beetroot is classed by some as a 'super food'

It is a good source of vitamins

A & C, calcium, phosphorus, potassium and magnesium as well as protein and fibre.

Its is also rich in folic acid, which is known to help in reducing the risks of birth defects if taken before conception and in the early stages of pregnancy.

Throughout history, it has been believed that beetroot

may have the power to prevent and even cure cancer. Research has shown that beetroot can inhibit tumor growth and has antioxidant properties that may help to prevent cancer in the first place. .

In the 16th century, it was given as a "blood builder" to people who were pale and run down



Fresh beetroot

Seasonal recipe - Borscht

Ingredients:

4 large onions
2 medium peeled potatoes
4 peeled carrots
2 large tomatoes
1/4 head of cabbage
3 medium sized beetroots
4 large cloves of garlic
Parsley and/or dill to taste
1 tbsp vinegar or lemon juice
Cooking oil for frying
1 tbsp salt (to taste)
1 tbsp sugar (to taste)

Directions:

Chop the onions, potatoes, cabbage, and tomatoes into small pieces, and grate the

beets and carrots into approximately 1-inch long pieces.

Fry the onions until golden-brown. Add the carrots to the onions and cook for two or three minutes more.

Add the tomatoes and beetroot to the frying pan. Immediately pour vinegar or lemon juice over the beetroot to preserve their color and taste.

Mix everything, then cover the pan with a lid and cook for 5-10 minutes more at low heat.

Pour cool water into a large pot so that the water takes up between 1/2 and 2/3 of the pot's total capacity. Turn on

medium heat and wait until the water is boiling.

Add the potatoes to the boiling water and wait 3-4 minutes.

Add the cabbage and wait about two minutes.

Add everything in the frying pan to the pot.

Add the garlic, parsley, and dill.

Add the salt and sugar.

Wait until the water is boiling again and then turn off the heat. Cover the pot with a lid.

Let the soup cook in its own heat for about 2 hours.

Serve with sour cream. Enjoy!

Borscht with sour cream



How to simply cook beetroot

To roast beetroot, first rub the beetroots with a little olive oil, wrap lightly in foil and put into a moderately hot oven (200C) for 1 1/2 hours, or until right through when pierced with a knife.

To boil, place the un-cut beetroots into a pan, cover with water and bring to the boil. Then put a lid on the pan and simmer gently for 1 to 2 hours.

Facts about beetroot

It originated in the Mediterranean in pre-Christian times and was often left as an offering to the god Apollo at his temple in Delphi

The world's heaviest beetroot weighed 23.4kg (51.48lb) and was grown by Ian Neale from Somerset in 2001.

Pickled beetroot became popular after the Second World War, when farmers began growing crops in the summer as well as winter.

Beetroot was first used as a vegetable dye in the 16th century - later, the Victorians used it as a hair colouring.

English folklore states that if a man and a woman eat from the same beetroot, they will fall in love.

The red pigment in beetroot - betaline - is used as a food colouring in a wide range of foods, including frozen pizzas, tomato paste and strawberry

Build your own wormery

If you are wondering what to do with your old potato peelings and other food waste, why not build yourself a wormery. This is technically known as vermiculture and it allows you to compost all your food waste faster than you imagined, and to produce high quality compost for your garden.

Its almost completely odorless, and does not require any maintenance.

One of the easiest ways, is to use old car tyres. You can make a 4-tier wormery by following these instructions:



1. Create a base from old bricks or flagstones (must be flat and with as few cracks as possible)
2. Place a layer of heavy newspaper on top of the bricks.
3. Stuff four old tyres with newspapers.
4. Pile the tyres on top of each other, with the first tire on the newspaper.
5. Put some scrunched up paper or cardboard in the bottom to soak up any excess liquid.
6. Fill the tyre wormery with organic material (semi-composted is best).
7. Add the composting worms (tiger or brandling species are best).
8. Use a piece of board or dustbin lid as a lid. The lid must be big enough to stop rain getting in.



Harvest a tyre's worth of fertilizer roughly every 8 weeks (during warm months).

Who are we

We are a husband and wife team hailing from Manchester and Le Mans respectively.

We have a passion for organic food, and have been running reason2.be since October 2008.

We welcome any feedback or comments you may have in improving our service.



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In the spotlight

During February, we were featured on TV Brussel, in their weekly program called 'Brussels international.'

It was an interesting day, as they followed me around doing my deliveries.

Special thanks goes to my customers; Antoine, Grace and Ramon for helping me out on the day.

This has appeared to trigger more press interest, and we be featured soon in Brussels Airlines flight magazine.

We rely almost entirely on word of mouth to build the business, so it is of course very welcome to have the interest from the media.



Top-up your organic box

Fruitus organic apricot cereal bar (35g)

€1.15



Amisa organic spelt crispy muesli (500g)

€2.99



Check more of our extras at
www.reason2.be

Belgian organic eggs coming soon