

Turnips (*Brassica napus*, var. *capitata*) are hardy and easy to grow in Alaska. They are, however, susceptible to damage from root maggots. They have a peppery flavor.

The purple underground root, can be eaten raw like a carrot — roasted, mashed or in a stew.

In addition to vitamins and minerals, the greens are especially high in lutein and zeaxanthin, two phytonutrients that may help to prevent macular degeneration.

The roots and greens are a source of glucosinolates, which may protect against some types of cancer.

Nutrition

Turnips: One cup of diced, boiled turnips contains approximately 33 calories, is high in vitamin C and is a good source of dietary fiber.

Turnip greens: One cup of cooked, boiled turnip greens contains approximately 29 calories, is high in vitamin A, vitamin C, folate and dietary fiber, and is a good source of calcium.

Storage

Turnips: Best stored at 32° to 35°F with high humidity. Leave at least 1 inch of stem on turnips and pack in slatted bins or crates lined with perforated plastic sheets. Turnips will store for 2 to 4 months in a cellar. For short-term storage, package turnips in perforated plastic bags and place in vegetable bin in refrigerator.

Turnip greens: Wash greens thoroughly and package in perforated plastic bags. Store in vegetable bin in refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Freezing

Turnips: Select small to medium, firm turnips. Wash, pare and cut into ½-inch cubes. Blanch in boiling water for 2 minutes. Cool promptly in cold water and drain. Pack into containers, leaving ½ inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

Turnip greens: Select young, tender green leaves. Wash thoroughly and cut off woody stems. Blanch greens in boiling water for 2 minutes. Cool promptly in cold water and drain. Pack into containers, leaving ½ inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

Canning

Turnips: Wash turnips, scrubbing well. Pare and slice or dice. Place turnips in a saucepan, cover with boiling

gauge pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure: pints, 70 minutes; quarts, 90 minutes.

Drying

Turnips: Choose firm, round turnips. Wash, remove tops and pare. Cut into slices ¼ to ½ inch thick. Steam blanch 3 to 5 minutes. Dry at 130°F for 8 to 10 hours or until brittle. Pack into clean, dry container with tight-fitting lid. Use in soups or as a snack.

Turnip greens: Use only young tender leaves. Wash and trim very thoroughly. Steam blanch for 2 to 2½ minutes. Dry at 130°F for 8 to 10 hours or until crisp. Pack into clean, dry container with tight-fitting lid. Use in soups and casseroles.

Recipes

Turnips and Ham Hocks

3 ham hocks, meaty and tender
12 turnips, golf-ball size, greens and root
1 green chili pepper, finely chopped
½ teaspoon sugar

Place ham hocks in a saucepan and cover with water and boil for 1 hour. Drain to remove excess salt. Barely cover with fresh water and simmer for 1½ hours more. Reserve liquid. Remove bones and cut meat into bite-sized pieces.

Wash greens and chop very fine. Barely cover greens with water, cover pan and cook for 1 hour over very low heat.

Pare turnips. Combine whole, pared turnips, ham pieces, reserved liquid, cooked greens, chili pepper and sugar. Liquid should not cover ingredients. Cover and simmer over very low heat for 1 hour. You can substitute bacon or ham for the ham hocks. Serves 2.

Turnips and Ham

12 turnips, golf-ball size, greens and roots
4 ounces low-sodium, smoked, lean ham, finely chopped
2 cups water
1 green chili pepper, finely chopped
½ teaspoon sugar

Wash greens and chop very fine. Barely cover greens with fresh water, cover pan and cook for 1 hour over very low heat.

Pare turnips. Combine whole, pared turnips, ham pieces, water, cooked greens, chili pepper and sugar. Liquid should not cover ingredients. Cover and simmer over low heat for 1 hour. Serves 2.

Turnip Tops and Smoked Ham Hocks

3 ham hocks
1 bunch turnip greens, washed and coarsely chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
2 tablespoons sugar
salt, to taste
bacon drippings

Soak ham hocks in cold water overnight to remove excess salt. Pour off the water and add enough fresh cold water to cover. Bring to a boil and simmer for 2 hours.

Wash turnip tops several times. Chop coarsely and add to ham hocks along with one average size onion (cut up), 2 tablespoons sugar, salt to taste and bacon drippings (several tablespoons). Cover and cook the mixture over medium heat until the tops are tender, about 1 hour. Serves 2.

Turnip Tops and Smoked Ham

4 ounces low-sodium smoked lean ham
1 bunch turnip greens, washed and coarsely chopped
1½ teaspoons sugar
1 medium onion, diced
1 tablespoon canola oil
2 cups water

Combine all ingredients. Cover and cook the mixture over medium heat until the tops are tender, about 1 hour. Serves 2.

Escalloped Turnips

3 cups diced turnips
1 teaspoon sugar
2 cups water
5 tablespoons butter, divided
3 tablespoons flour

½ teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon nutmeg
 milk, as needed
 ½ cup crushed dry cereal
 2 tablespoons grated cheese

Cook turnips in boiling salted and sugared water until tender. Drain and reserve liquid. Melt 3 tablespoons butter; stir in flour, salt and nutmeg. Add reserved liquid, stirring constantly (if less than 1½ cups, add milk to make full amount). Cook and stir over medium heat until sauce thickens. Combine with turnips in lightly oiled casserole. Combine cereal, 2 tablespoons melted butter and cheese; spread over turnip mixture. Bake in a moderately hot oven (350°F) until brown, about 25 minutes. Serves 6.

Escaloped Turnips

3 cups diced turnips
 1 teaspoon sugar
 2 cups water
 3 tablespoons flour
 ½ teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon nutmeg
 milk, as needed
 ½ cup crushed corn flakes
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 2 tablespoons grated cheese

Cook turnips in boiling salted and sugared water until tender. Drain and reserve liquid. Cool liquid, then combine liquid (if less than 1½ cups, add milk to make full amount) salt, nutmeg and flour in a jar with a tight fitting lid. Shake vigorously until smooth. Cook and stir over medium heat until sauce thickens. Combine with turnips in lightly oiled casserole. Combine cereal, vegetable oil and cheese; spread over turnip mixture. Bake in a moderately hot oven (350°F) until brown, about 25 minutes. Serves 6.

Quick Turnip Soup

2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
 2 tablespoons flour
 1 quart hot milk
 1 cup grated raw turnips
 salt and pepper to taste

Cook the onion in the butter or margarine for a few minutes. Blend in the flour. Add the milk, turnips, salt and pepper. Cook about 10 minutes, stirring frequently until the turnips are tender. Serves 4.

Quick Turnip Soup

2 tablespoons finely chopped onion
 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
 2 tablespoons flour
 1 quart one-percent milk
 1 cup grated raw turnips
 ½ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste

Cook onions in the vegetable oil in a nonstick skillet for a few minutes. Wisk the flour with the milk until well combined. Stir all ingredients into skillet and cook about 10 minutes, stirring frequently until the turnips are tender. Serves 4.

Turnips With Pepper Sauce

½ cup chopped onion
 1 cup chopped green pepper
 4 tablespoons margarine or vegetable oil
 1 recipe white sauce
 3 cups cooked turnips

Cook onion and green pepper in margarine until tender. Add white sauce and turnips and heat thoroughly. Serves 6.

White Sauce: Melt 2 tablespoons butter; add 2 tablespoons flour and blend thoroughly. When perfectly smooth and free from lumps, but not browned, add ½ teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon white pepper. Gradually add 1 cup milk. Stir constantly over a low heat until the sauce boils. Cook 5 minutes.

Turnips With Pepper Sauce

½ cup chopped onion
 1 cup chopped green pepper
 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
 1 recipe white sauce
 3 cups cooked turnips

Cook onion and green pepper in vegetable oil until tender. Add white sauce and turnips and heat thoroughly. Serves 6.

