

Purple Carrots?

Yes, 'tis true: The earliest carrots were purple!

Known to mankind for about 5,000 years, historians think the first carrots came from the part of the world we now call Afghanistan.

Egyptian temple drawings from 2000 B.C. feature a purple plant many specialists believe to be a purple carrot. Archeologists have also found papyruses in the tombs of pharaohs (Egyptian kings) with information about carrots and carrot seeds.



During the reign of the Roman Empire, carrots were purple or white. Later, as they were introduced by traveling merchants into other countries, they could also be found in the colors of red, yellow, green, and black... but not orange.

A thousand years later, carrots were being grown in the fields of France and Germany — but they still weren't orange!

Finally, in the 16th century, people in Holland developed orange-colored carrots by crossing pale yellow carrots with red ones. The orange color was created to honor their country's rulers, known as the *House of Orange*, named after an area near Avignon, in southern France, where the royal family had its origins. William of Orange is the father of the Netherlands.









About that same time, the carrot traveled across the English Channel from France into England. The French word *carotte* accompanied the vegetable on its journey and was adapted by the English as *carrot*.

But what about America? Carrots were grown in the Jamestown, Virginia colony in 1609, even before the Mayflower arrived (in 1620). The Pilgrims may have been the first to plant them in Massachusetts. Native Americans loved carrots and quickly adopted them.

Today, hundreds of years after the invention of the orange variety we know so well, purple carrots are being reintroduced to the marketplace. They are slightly sweeter than orange carrots, and some have more vitamins. You can find them in grocery stores, or you may buy the seeds and try growing them yourself.

Bon appétit!

Carrot Trivia

-  Wild rabbits do not eat carrots. Bun E., however, loves them!
-  Carrots were first grown for medical use, not for eating.
-  Don't like milk? Eat carrots instead! You can get the same amount of calcium from eating 9 carrots as from drinking a glass of whole milk.
-  There is a type of carrot for every letter of the alphabet, from A to Z.
-  You can fit about 2,000 carrot seeds onto one teaspoon.
-  *Un peu fatigué ?* (Tired?) Eating 3 carrots will give you enough energy to walk 3 miles!
-  The wild carrot plant is also known as Queen Anne's Lace, so named by the Americans.
-  Black swallowtail butterflies are especially attracted to the carrot plant. (They are also quite lovely!)

Bun E. sends his special thanks to the World Carrot Museum for the photo and information! www.carrotmuseum.com

