



## Zion Farmers Market Veg-u-cation

### Positively Rad-ish!



Although radishes come in a tremendous diversity of sizes, shapes and colors, they all belong to a single subspecies of the mustard family. Aside from the familiar round red radishes, there are thin white ones, known as icicle radishes; Easter egg radishes that range in color from purple and white to lavender and red; and deep red, elongated French breakfast radishes, which fade to white at the root. Central Europeans serve grated black radishes as a first course.

Radishes were first grown in China thousands of years ago, then in Egypt where ancient writings have shown they were cultivated before the building of the pyramids.

In Ancient Greece the radish was so revered that gold replicas were made and offered to the god Apollo, who it seems was a very busy god responsible for a number of facets of life, including medicine and healing.

The radish found its way to England in the mid 16th century and into Shakespeare's *Henry IV* shortly after – ' . . . when a' was naked, he was, for all the world, like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife.' (*King Henry IV. Part II. Act iii. Sc. 2.*)

Although radishes are sometimes boiled, steamed or sautéed, their flavor and texture are perhaps best appreciated when raw. They are sliced and used to add color and crunch to salads. Spring radishes, accompanied with sweet butter and bread, are a classic French hors d'oeuvre.

The sharp, pungent flavor of radish comes from "isothiocyanate" compound in them, varying from mild in case of white-icicles to very hot in red globe and other pigmented varieties. Tender top greens of radish are also eaten as leafy-greens in some parts of the world.

**Daikon** or Japanese radish is native to Asia. It is generally grown during winter months and features elongated smooth, icy-white roots.

**Black Spanish radishes** are peppery and more flavorful than their white counterparts.

**Green radish** is native to Northern China region. Its outer peel near the top stem end features leafy-green color which, gradually changes to white color near the lower tip. Inside, its flesh has beautiful jade green color, sweet and less pungent flavor.

**Watermelon radishes** have watermelon like flesh inside. They are less peppery but mildly sweet something similar to that of white-icicle varieties.

When left to grow for longer than the usual root-harvest period, all kinds of radish bear small flowers, which subsequently develop into edible fruit pods. Podding or a *rat-tailed* radish is a type of seed-pod variety grown exclusively for their long rat-tail like tapering edible pods. The pods feature a mixture of mild radish flavor and spiciness.



### Health benefits of radish

- Since ancient times, Chinese believe that eating radish and other brassica group vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, and napa-cabbage would bring wholesome health.
- They are one of very low calorie root vegetables. Fresh root provides just 16 calories per 100 g. Nonetheless; they are a very good source of anti-oxidants, electrolytes, minerals, vitamins and dietary fiber.
- Radish, like other cruciferous and Brassica family vegetables, contains *isothiocyanate* anti-oxidant compound called **sulforaphane**. Studies suggest that sulforaphane has proven role against prostate, breast, colon and ovarian cancers by virtue of its cancer-cell growth inhibition, and cyto-toxic effects on cancer cells.
- Fresh roots are good source of vitamin C; provide about 15 mg or 25% of DRI of vitamin C per 100 g. Vitamin-C is a powerful water soluble anti-oxidant required by the body for synthesis of collagen. It helps the body scavenge harmful free radicals, prevention from cancers, inflammation and help boost immunity.
- In addition, they contain adequate levels of folates, vitamin B-6, riboflavin, thiamin and minerals such as iron, magnesium, copper and calcium.
- Further, they contain many phytochemicals like *indoles* which are detoxifying agents and zeaxanthin, lutein and beta carotene, which are flavonoid antioxidants. Their total antioxidant strength, measured in terms of oxygen radical absorbance capacity (**ORAC value**), is 1736  $\mu\text{mol TE}/100\text{ g}$ .



### Selecting

Look for smaller, round radishes in spring and elongated ones as summer arrives. Large Asian radishes are in season in autumn, and black radishes are in season in winter. Some more unusual varieties of radish are found in Asian groceries and farmers' markets. All radishes should be firm, with smooth skins and unwilted green leaves.

### Storing

If you are planning to serve the radishes whole as an hors d'oeuvre, don't remove the leaves; serve the radishes within a day or two of purchase. Otherwise, remove the leaves before storing small radishes in a perforated bag in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Large radishes such as daikon can be refrigerated for up to 2 weeks. Use the greens in salads or cook them like other greens.

### Preparing

Scrub the radishes and trim both ends, unless you are serving them as an hors d'oeuvre, in which case you may want to trim the root end but leave 1 inch of the leaves.



### Fun Facts

1. **40m packs of radish** were sold in the UK last year
2. That is roughly 8,000,000 kilos (8,000 tonnes) – 700 more tonnes than the Eiffel tower. It is also equal to 40 blue whales, or even 900,000 crates of beer!
3. **If you put all of the radish in 40m packs end to end**, it would stretch for 1 billion cm (10,000 kilometres) that would take you from London to New Delhi where you could go and enjoy a famous Kashmiri Radish Curry
4. **To see a garden of radishes in your dream**, signifies prosperous business and kind friends. To dream that you are eating a radish, denotes that your feelings will be slightly hurt as a result of the thoughtlessness of someone near you. To dream that you are planting radishes, foretells that your heart's desires will be happily realized.

5. **Fast growing crop:** Radishes are a fast growing crop and grow from seed to eating plant in 25 days, making them the first UK field-grown salad vegetables to come into season in April.
6. **Did you know radishes can cure ills?** Radishes can help with stomach ache and hiccups (but too many can make you burp .... !)
7. **Radish Oil:** Radish seeds were an important source of oil in Ancient Egypt before olive trees were introduced to the country. Certain varieties of radish are still grown for oil production today. Although not popular for human consumption (the flavour is very strong) they have potential as a bio-fuel.
8. **Night of the Radishes:** In Oaxaca in Mexico, December 23rd is known as "The Night of the Radishes" (Noche de Rabanos). The festival features depictions of all kinds of subjects, including nativity scenes - all carved from radishes!
9. **Radishes in literature:** In the novel 'Gone with the Wind' it was after attempting to eat a radish – the only food she could get – that a starving Scarlett O'Hara declared, "As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again."
10. **Peter Rabbit – a naughty radish fan:** Our very own Peter Rabbit enjoyed his radishes and famously ate a rather long variety known as the Long Scarlet in an illustration from the Beatrix Potter book.
11. **Hot weather, hot radishes:** If it's a long, hot summer, you get hotter radishes and similarly when it's milder you get cooler radishes.
12. **Ancient Wages:** Radishes, onions and garlic were paid as 'wages' to the Ancient Egyptian labourers who built the Pyramids.
13. **Giant radishes:** Some varieties of radish can grow up to 3ft long, weighing 100lbs (45kg). Needless to say, you're unlikely to see these in your local supermarket!

