

A Rainbow of Radishes

They come in a variety of shapes, colors, and flavors—
and you can cook them, too.



PHOTO BY MARIA ZORDAN

By LYNNE S. GOLDMAN

Radishes and I were not always friends. When I had the misfortune of finding one sliced in my salad, I would gently push the red-tinged rounds aside.

My radish epiphany came several years ago when I tasted a locally grown French Breakfast radish. This long, pale pink radish was crisp and mild with just a hint of spice. I started eating it raw standing in front of the fridge.

At farms in the River Towns region, an enticing variety of radishes show up in both spring and fall. (They like cooler weather.) Stephanie Spock, farmer at Rolling Hills Farm in Lambertville, NJ, points out that radishes change flavor seasonally—spicy

in the spring and summer and much sweeter when harvested after a few frosts.

At local farmers' markets in the spring, look for French Breakfast, Purple Cherry, and the well-known Red round radish. In fall, you'll find black radishes, the beautiful pink Watermelon radishes (named for their coloring), and Daikons—both the purple and green varieties as well as the traditional long white.

If you're not familiar with some of these varieties, Daikon radishes are milder, Watermelon radishes trend spicy, while black radishes taste earthy. "Many cultures use the black radish medicinally," says Tricia Borneman, who with her husband Tom Murtha, own Blooming Glen Farm in Blooming Glen, PA. She says many of their customers tell them about family remedies for colds and flus and lung health."

Radishes look gorgeous on a crudité platter or grated on top of tacos or salad, but they are great cooked too. "My favorite are the purple and green Daikons," says Spock. "They lose all their spice when cooked. I often throw them in soups, sautés, and stews in place of potatoes. They have a great crunch but will soften when cooked longer."

"I love spring radishes roasted in a mixed root veggie tray," says Borneman. "They each have different flavor profiles that really shine when roasted, and the roasting brings a touch of sweetness to the savory." Borneman says they enjoy leftover roasted vegetables alongside eggs in the morning.

If you're a little skeptical about cooked radishes, give them a try. Start by roasting them with a pan full of other familiar spring vegetables. It's a small culinary risk you'll be glad you took. 🌿

Lynne S. Goldman writes about Bucks County food and farms in her blog Bucks County Taste.

Roasted Spring Vegetables with Radishes

Makes about 6 cups

Enjoy these bright vegetables right out of the oven as a side dish, drizzle them with vinaigrette and serve as a salad, or toss them with pasta and pesto for a satisfying main course.

Heat oven to 500 degrees. Place enough spring vegetables (see below) to more or less fit snugly in a single layer on a 12- by 18-inch rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with 3 tablespoon of olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper; toss to coat and roast for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, toss 1 bunch of asparagus, tough ends snapped off, with 1 tablespoon of oil and a sprinkling of salt and pepper. Remove vegetables from the oven, scatter asparagus over them; continue to roast until asparagus is bright green and remaining vegetables are lightly brown, about 5 minutes. Serve and enjoy.

Radishes (left whole if small, halved if large)

Small carrots, halved lengthwise

New potatoes, left whole if small, halved if large

Shallots, peeled. Left whole if small, halved if large or frozen pearl onions (do not thaw)



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