

Rutabaga

- ◆ Rutabaga is believed to be a cross between the turnip and cabbage, and to have originated during the Middle Ages in Europe.
- ◆ Rutabagas are typically harvested in the autumn and winter months.
- ◆ Although rutabaga is a classic cellar vegetable, it is best purchased fresh at your local farmers market while the root is still tender-firm, sweet and moist. The longer it is out of the ground, the drier the root gets and is likely to be tough to cut and too tough to eat, and its flavor decreases with age.
- ◆ Generally harvested when it is at least four inches in diameter, the rutabaga's creamy, yellow flesh is crisp and peppery-sweet when raw and soft and sweet when cooked properly.
- ◆ Applications: Like other root vegetables, rutabaga has a natural sweetness that is enhanced by cooking. Diced rutabaga and slowly sauté with apples and onions until caramelized. Toss thinly sliced rutabaga with soy sauce, vinegar, sugar and garlic then serve fresh as a side dish. Boil diced rutabaga and toss with herbed vinaigrette and Israeli couscous for a side dish. Steam or boil diced rutabaga until soft, then mash with cooked carrots and flavor with minced lemongrass. Rutabaga will keep in cool, dark storage for months.
- ◆ The rutabaga evolved as a cross between wild cabbage and the turnip. Its name is derived from the Swedish word "rotabagge", meaning "round root". Rutabagas became a crop in America as early as 1806, and are primarily grown in the Northern states, as they are a cool season crop.

