

# MEALS AND MORE



## OBSERVANCES:

- April Fool's Day (April 1)
- International Carrot Day (April 4)
- National Burrito Day (April 6)
- World Health Day (April 7)
- National Banana Day (April 17)
- Earth Day (April 22)
- Alcohol Awareness Month
- Stress Awareness Month
- National Brussel Sprout Month
- National Cabbage Month

**APRIL  
2024**

## **APRIL 4 IS INTERNATIONAL CARROT DAY!**

When you were a kid, you probably heard that carrots are good for your eyes. That's true—but the benefits of carrots don't stop there. Here are some other good-for-you perks, plus simple, healthful ways to enjoy the colorful root veggie. Turn to the next page to read more...



**Carrots are full of benefits—they may promote healthy vision, balance your blood sugar, help with weight management, lower your risk of cancer, regulate blood pressure, reduce heart disease, improve immunity, and boost brain health.**

Knowing about all their beneficial antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and disease-prevention effects, you're probably excited to get all the great health benefits out of these root vegetables. And they add a touch of color to your plate.

But each color of carrot has a little something different to offer. The purple variety has polyacetylenes, which also have anti-inflammatory properties. You'll find the most lutein in the yellow variety. Orange carrots have lots of alpha- and beta-carotene, while black carrots are rich in phenolic compounds. And red carrots have high amounts of lycopene.

But which way to eat them: Raw or cooked? Mix it up throughout the week. There are benefits to eating carrots both raw and cooked. Raw carrots have a lower glycemic index, and more vitamin C. Cooking carrots break down the vegetable's thick cellular walls, which makes the antioxidants easier to absorb. And mix up the color of carrots too.

Here are some of these ideas for adding more carrots (and color) into your diet:

- Add shredded or chopped raw carrots to overnight oats, salads, or slaws, and fold them into nut butter.
- Use whole or cut, raw carrots to scoop up dip, olive tapenade, and tahini, or add them to fresh pressed juices or smoothies.
- To cook, steam carrots or toss them into your favorite stir fry, soup, veggie chili, or stew.
- They're also amazing oven-roasted, brushed with a little extra virgin olive oil, salt, and pepper (see this month's recipe on the back page).
- Enjoy carrots as a snack with guacamole or hummus.
- Carrots can even be incorporated into desserts, including carrot cake, of course, as well as carrot pie (think pumpkin or sweet potato, but with carrots!), carrot cookies, whoopie pies, dark chocolate truffles, and even carrot ice cream.

([health.com/nutrition/health-benefits-of-carrots](http://health.com/nutrition/health-benefits-of-carrots))

## **NUTRIENT OF THE MONTH: CAROTENOIDS**

Carotenoids are pigments in plants, algae, and photosynthetic bacteria. These pigments produce the bright yellow, red, and orange colors in plants, vegetables, and fruits. Carotenoids act as a type of antioxidant for humans.

There are more than 600 different types of carotenoids. Some can be converted into vitamin A when released into the body. A few of the most common carotenoids include: alpha carotene, beta carotene, beta cryptoxanthin, lutein, zeaxanthin, and lycopene.

Carotenoids must be consumed through the diet. They are best absorbed through a source of fat. Foods rich in carotenoids include: yams, kale, spinach, watermelon, cantaloupe, bell peppers, tomatoes, carrots, mangoes, and oranges.

Carotenoids are beneficial antioxidants that can protect you from disease and enhance your immune system. Provitamin A carotenoids can be converted into vitamin A, which is essential for growth, immune system function, and eye health. ([www.healthline.com/health/carotenoids#benefits](http://www.healthline.com/health/carotenoids#benefits))



# SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

## **Let's talk about your relationship with Alcohol since its Alcohol Awareness Month.**

What does your relationship with alcohol look like?

Do your drinking habits affect how productive you are? Maybe the money you spend on alcohol often exceeds your budget's bandwidth. Or perhaps, you've been waking up groggy ever since your nighttime routine interlaced with alcohol. Alcohol can impact different facets of our lives—from our decision-making and productivity to our finances, health, and relationship with loved ones. Of course, there isn't anything wrong with enjoying some alcohol to wind down or get you into a social mood. But for many of us, our drinking habits may play a larger role in our daily lives than we might realize.

And that's where alcohol awareness comes into play. Some research suggests that over 60% of American adults consume alcohol. Because alcohol has become such an ingrained part of our culture, it's easy to look past its impact on our daily lives. And without us realizing it, we may be sweeping drinking-related issues right under the carpet.

Alcohol awareness is the process of conscious and continual reflection on our drinking habits. Alcohol awareness doesn't only bring possible drinking problems to light, but it also encourages us to be mindful of our alcohol consumption—even if we do not drink much or often.

Any level of drinking, in this sense, can affect our personal life, relationships, work, and health. Maybe the sip of wine you have before bed throws off your sleep cycle at night. Or perhaps, weekend night outs usually leave you with a nasty hangover on Monday mornings. When we begin to assess the impact of our alcohol consumption on these different areas, we become aware of problematic habits. This opens up the space for us to start building more mindful drinking practices.

During alcohol awareness month, we take the opportunity to reflect proactively on the outcomes of our drinking habits. This encourages us to correct unhealthy drinking patterns and improve our relationship with alcohol through more mindful practices.

Some questions to ask yourself about your drinking habits include the following:

- Does my drinking make it harder for me to perform my best at work or home?
- Have friends or family members shown concern about how much I drink?
- Do I feel moody, irritable, or tired the morning after I drink?
- Do I constantly have to deal with headaches, hangovers, or other physical side effects from drinking?
- Do I have trouble stopping after having one or two drinks?
- What are common triggers that cause me to drink?
- Do I have to hide my drinking habits from friends or family?

Nurturing a healthy relationship with alcohol usually starts with proactively assessing our drinking habits, urges, and triggers. Doing so allows us to devise personalized strategies that help us cut back on our drinking and make better decisions. If you are ready to make a change, check out some of the best ways to start practicing mindfulness and self-awareness when you drink by going to [Sunnyside.co/blog/alcohol-awareness](https://Sunnyside.co/blog/alcohol-awareness) or visit <https://alcoholicsanonymous.com/aa-meeting/kent-county-central-office/> OR [alcoholicsanonymous.com/aa-meetings/michigan/allegan/](https://alcoholicsanonymous.com/aa-meetings/michigan/allegan/)

**RECIPE:** Basic roasted carrots - Roasted Carrots (3 ways!)

|   |  |                      |
|---|--|----------------------|
| <b>PREP TIME:</b><br>10 minutes   | <b>COOK TIME:</b><br>40 minutes  | <b>SERVING SIZE:</b> |
| <b>INGREDIENTS:</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 pounds carrots</li> <li>• 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil</li> <li>• ½ teaspoon fine sea salt</li> <li>• Freshly ground black pepper</li> <li>• Optional garnish:<br/>2 teaspoons chopped fresh chives, green onions, parsley</li> </ul> For the spiced version, you'll also need*: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ½ to 1 ½ teaspoons chili powder</li> <li>• ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon</li> </ul> For the honey butter version, you'll also need**: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 tablespoon unsalted butter</li> <li>• 1 tablespoon honey</li> </ul> | <b>DIRECTIONS:</b><br>1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper for easy cleanup, if desired.<br>2. To prepare your carrots, peel them and then cut them on the diagonal so each piece is about ½” thick at the widest part.<br>3. Place the carrots on the baking sheet. Add the olive oil, salt and a few twists of pepper.<br>4. Toss until the carrots are lightly coated in oil and seasonings. Arrange them in a single layer. Roast the carrots until they're caramelized on the edges and easily pierced through by a fork, 25 to 40 minutes, tossing halfway.<br>5. Sprinkle fresh herbs over the roasted carrots, if using. Serve the carrots warm, straight from the sheet pan or from a serving dish. Leftover carrots will keep well, covered and refrigerated, for 3 to 4 days. Gently reheat before serving. |                      |
| <b>NOTES:</b><br>(from COOKIE + Kate)   |  |                      |



**Meet Haley Bean!** She is our awesome Volunteer Coordinator who is kept very busy coordinating over 1,000 volunteers each year. And she would love to hear from you! If you have some spare time and are looking for a productive way to use that time, we need you! There are many opportunities to volunteer at MOWWM, even if it's just one time, like helping scoop up meals in our kitchen for homebound clients, delivering those meals, serving meals at one of our community dining sites, or assisting at our Senior Pantry. Want to learn more? Give Haley a call at 616.459.3111. ext. 137



**If you would like to know more about our home-delivered meals, pantry, or dining site programs, please call Meals On Wheels Western Michigan at 616-459-3111 or go to [www.mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org](http://www.mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org)**



Meals on Wheels Western Michigan is supported by:

