

# The Curve

## EAT PARSNIPS!

Pale yellow or ivory in colour and shaped like a slightly bulbous carrot, parsnips are one of the tastiest and most appealing root vegetables. Cheap and simple to prepare, their soft, fragrant, slightly sweet flesh adds a warm, comforting element to dishes.

**HISTORY** - Parsnips have been cultivated by humans for at least 2,000 years. In ancient times parsnips and carrots were often referred to by the same name (*pastinaca* was used by Pliny to describe both). The writings of Apicius indicate that the Romans held the parsnip in some esteem.

For centuries in Europe they were a ubiquitous and nutritious staple food. Before sugar was widely available parsnips were used to sweeten dishes such as cakes and jams.

Their popularity declined following the introduction of the potato, and this decline continued as sugar became more readily available. The parsnip is now not commonly eaten outside N. European countries.

**BIOLOGY** - Wild parsnips are found across Europe and Asia. The cultivated form - *Pastinaca sativa* - belongs to the umbelliferae family which includes carrots, chervil, parsley, fennel and celeriac.

**NUTRITION** - Parsnips are a good source of vitamin C, fibre, folate and potassium (increased potassium in the diet is associated with a lowering in blood pressure).

### TIPS:

**BUYING** - Parsnips should be firm and dry. The likelihood of a parsnip having a tough, woody core seems to increase with size. Irregularly shaped parsnips won't taste any different but are a little fiddlier and more wasteful to prepare.

Flavour and sweetness are increased by frost, so parsnips are better during mid/late winter.

**COOKING:** Scan the code below to view and download the recipe for '*Parsnip & Thyme Bread*'.

