



Legume-Free West African "Akara" Fritters + Quick Pickled Carrots

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 20 / **Cook Time** 10 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

blend: to stir together two or more ingredients until just combined; blending is a gentler process than mixing.

pan-fry: to cook in a pan in a small amount of fat.

pickle: to preserve or flavor a food by covering it with a salty and/or sweet liquid brine.

Equipment

- Medium bowl
- Cutting board + kid-safe knife
- Grater
- Dry measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Small saucepan
- Liquid measuring cup
- Large bowl, for use with an immersion blender (or a food processor)
- Nonstick skillet

Ingredients

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- Pickled Carrots:
- 1 green onion

- 1 garlic clove
- 1 C coarsely-grated carrots (about 2 carrots)
- 1 tsp salt
- black pepper to taste
- 1/4 C honey/agave nectar
- 1/4 C vinegar
- Legume-Free Fritters:
- 1 C of grated carrots (about 2 carrots)
- 1 green onion
- 1 egg ******(for EGG ALLERGY sub 1 1/2 T vegetable oil + 1 1/2 T water + 1 tsp baking powder)******
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp honey/agave nectar
- 1/4 C of flour ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free flour)******
- pita bread, corn tortillas, or French bread ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free pita bread or corn tortillas)******

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Egg: For 1 egg, substitute 1 1/2 T vegetable oil + 1 1/2 T water + 1 tsp baking powder.

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free/nut-free flour. Substitute gluten-free/nut-free pita bread or corn tortillas.

Instructions

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pickling intro

We will be learning about Pickling first today! Pickling is the process of preserving or expanding the lifespan of food by either anaerobic fermentation in brine or immersion in vinegar. The resulting food is called a pickle. Pickling can preserve perishable foods for months. Pickling began 4,000 years ago using cucumbers native to India. This was used as a way to preserve food for out-of-season use and for long journeys,

especially by sea. The term pickle is derived from the Dutch word "pekel," meaning "brine."

chop + grate + toss

We'll start with the pickled carrots. Have your kids chop up **1 green onion** and **1 garlic clove** and add them to a medium bowl. Next, grate about **2 carrots** to measure 1 cup. Toss the carrots with the onion, garlic, **1 teaspoon salt**, and **black pepper** to taste.

boil + dissolve + pour

Pour **1/4 cup honey** and **1/4 cup vinegar** into a small saucepan on your stovetop and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring until the honey dissolves. Once the mixture is at a rapid boil, turn off the heat. Carefully pour the hot vinegar mixture over the seasoned carrots, let cool, and enjoy atop your fritters!

fritters + frying intro

We are also making "akara" (ah-KAR-ah), or West African fritters, and will be frying them today. Frying is the cooking of food in oil or another fat. Chemically, oils and fats are the same, differing only in melting point, and the distinction is only made when needed. Fats can reach much higher temperatures than water at normal atmospheric pressure. Through frying, one can sear or even carbonize the surface of foods while caramelizing sugars. The food is cooked much more quickly and has a characteristic crispness and texture.

chop + measure + combine

Have your kids grate about **2 carrots** to measure 1 cup, chop **1 green onion**, and then add them to a large bowl (for use with an immersion blender) or a food processor. Add **1 egg**, **1/2 teaspoon salt**, **1/2 teaspoon black pepper**, **1/2 teaspoon honey**, and **1/4 cup flour**.

blend + heat + drizzle

Process the mixture with your immersion blender or food processor until a smooth batter forms, adding a little water if necessary. When finished, the batter should be similar to the consistency of light hummus. Next, heat a non-stick skillet on your stovetop and drizzle some oil to lightly coat the pan's bottom.

drop + fry

Using a spoon, carefully drop 1/2 to 1 tablespoon of batter onto your skillet and fry until golden brown, about 3 to 5 min, turning the fritters once. Repeat until you use all of the batter.

drain + sprinkle + serve

Remove the fritters, drain on a paper towel, and keep warm. Sprinkle them with salt (if you wish). To serve, split open 1/2 of a **pita bread** and fill it with 1 to 2 fritters and a generous spoonful of **pickled carrots**. Alternatively, you can arrange the fritters with the pita bread on a platter and serve with the pickled carrots.

Featured Ingredient: Carrots!

Hi! I'm Carrot!

"I'm at the root of this recipe! Get it? Root? Carrots are root vegetables! We grow up in dark and cozy soil. Our leaves get plenty of sunshine, though. If you grow us, it's so satisfying to pull us out of our underground home and know you'll be tasting our crunchy sweetness very soon. But you may want to wash us first! You can eat carrots raw or cook them first. Either way, you'll enjoy our flavor, texture, and color in salads, savory dishes, and desserts, like carrot cake!"

History

Before carrots were orange, they were purple, red, white, and yellow. In the 16th century (after the Middle Ages), Dutch carrot growers invented the orange carrot in honor of the House of Orange, the Dutch Royal Family (for Kings and Queens). They did this by crossbreeding pale yellow carrots with red carrots. Carrots soon caught on in England as both a food and a fashion accessory. For example, it's said that ladies in the 1600s would decorate their hats with carrot tops instead of feathers!

The carrots we eat today were domesticated from a wild carrot native to Europe and southwestern Asia. No one knows exactly how old carrots are, but history traces them back about 5,000 years. They were mistaken for parsnips before the carrot was identified as a distinct vegetable. Carrots and parsnips are related but from different families. Parsnips are white and look a lot like carrots. They're also root vegetables!

When carrots were first grown many hundreds of years ago, farmers prized them for their aromatic leaves and seeds—not just the roots!

According to some sources, carrots are the second most popular vegetable in the world, behind just one other. Can you guess what's number one? Potatoes!

The longest carrot ever recorded was over 20 feet long! (The measurement included the taproot's long, skinny end.) The heaviest carrot recorded weighed over 22 pounds!

You may think rabbits love carrots naturally, and this is largely because of the popularity of the wise-cracking and charming cartoon rabbit character named Bugs Bunny. We see Bugs Bunny munching on a carrot in most scenes. In reality, if a rabbit ate a whole carrot, it would be like you or me eating 20 carrots in one sitting! Way too much! Here's another fun fact: The voice of Bugs Bunny, Mel Blanc, reportedly did not like carrots at all.

Anatomy & Etymology

Carrots belong to the Umbelliferae family, named for their resemblance to an umbrella when their leafy green stems are attached. This family includes celery, parsnip, fennel, dill, and coriander.

Carrots are root vegetables, meaning they grow underneath the ground. Their feathery leaves grow above the ground. Can you think of other root vegetables? A few of them are beets, onions, turnips, potatoes, radishes, parsnips, fennel, garlic, and jicama.

You can eat every part of the carrot. Typically we eat the root part of the plant, but the stems and leaves

are edible, too! A carrot's root can grow anywhere from 2 to 20 inches long before it's picked!

Carrots like to grow in cooler climates, not tropical, hot places. For this reason, they are usually grown in the autumn, winter, and spring months.

Baby carrots sold in grocery stores started as long carrots that were sliced and tumbled into smaller pieces to make them "baby-sized."

Carrot seeds are tiny. Find a teaspoon. How many carrot seeds do you think will fit inside? About 2,000!

A carrot plant will live for two years, meaning new crops need to be planted from seed every two years.

There are two main classes of carrots: Western and Eastern. The Western class includes four types, classified by their root shape: Chantenay, Danvers, Imperator, and Nantes. Several cultivars (varieties created by selective breeding) exist under each type. Many varieties have different colors than the typical orange. How many colors have you seen? The next time you're in the grocery store, look for these diverse carrots.

The English word "carrot" comes from the Greek word "karoton."

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

One large carrot or a handful of baby carrots counts as one vegetable serving. Aim for three servings of veggies a day for kids and five servings for adults.

Carrots can be eaten raw, roasted, juiced, boiled, mashed, or steamed. However, they are most nutrient-dense when cooked and eaten with fat like butter or oil.

When you eat a carrot, how does it taste? Modern carrots have been bred to be sweet, which is why we often use them in baked goods like carrot cake! On the other hand, ancient carrots were bitter, not sweet. Look for firm, brightly colored carrots with smooth, firm skin. Carrots that are limp or black near the top are not fresh.

Thicker carrots may be older and tougher to eat, whereas thinner carrots are typically younger, fresher, and sweeter.

Store carrots in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator, where they will keep for a few weeks!

One of the tastiest, easiest ways to cook carrots is to toss them with melted butter, salt, honey, and garlic, then roast them at 425 F for 20 minutes.

You can grate raw carrots and add them to salads or chop them to add to soups or stews. If you boil or steam carrots, you then puree them to add to breads, cookies, cakes, or even tomato sauce to sweeten it. Carrots add natural sweetness to whatever recipe they're in (and a pretty orange color, too!).

Nutrition

Eyes! The color of a fruit or vegetable tells us what nutrient it contains (nature is amazing!). Orange vegetables and fruits have a particular nutrient called beta carotene. Beta carotene was named for the carrot itself! This nutrient converts to vitamin A inside the body, which is good for our eyes! Studies have shown that only three percent of beta carotene is released from the raw vegetable when we digest it. But

this percentage can be improved when we juice or puree raw carrots or cook them with fat like butter or oil. Carrots have the most beta carotene of any vegetable!

Teeth! The crunchiness of carrots helps clean the plaque off your teeth and gums, just like your toothbrush! Of course, this doesn't mean eating a carrot at the end of the day can substitute for brushing your teeth! Carrots also have minerals that protect the teeth.

Purple carrots include anthocyanin, an antioxidant, just like purple eggplants, blueberries, and other colorful fruits.

As with all vegetables, eating carrots helps protect us from getting sick!