



Mariquita Farm's weekly year round recipe newsletter, with notes by Andy, links to his larger articles ([Ladybug Letter](#)), announcements, and events.

"Dear Andy: Why aren't parsnips sold in bunches like carrots? I like to see how fresh the carrots are by looking at the greens, and the tops are never wasted because I feed them to my bunny. The parsnips in the market look old"

Signed, "Fanatic about freshness."

Dear Fanatic: It's true that you can tell if a bunch of carrots is fresh by looking to see if the greens are perky. It's also true that if you leave the greens on the carrots they will continue to transpire—the roots are still alive, remember—and the carrots will wilt. I recommend topping the carrots soon after purchase, so the greens don't wick out the moisture and render the carrots limp before their time.

Parsnips are related to carrots, but their roots are even more prone to dehydration. Supermarkets expect parsnips to come topped and even waxed so as to minimize wilting. Waxing a parsnip can make it feel greasy, and the wax also chokes off any aroma that might serve as a clue to the vegetable's freshness; too bad, because parsnips are wonderful, and too frequently ignored. I don't wax the parsnips I grow on my farm. Instead, we "store" the roots by leaving them in the ground where they grow until we need them. Then, after harvesting and washing the roots, we bag them.



As a farmer, I can't recommend bunching parsnips. During harvest we often bunch carrots for sale because it is cheaper than weighing and bagging them, but parsnip foliage naturally exudes organic chemical compounds called *furanocoumarins* which can provoke an alarming allergic reaction in some people. Symptoms of exposure to furanocoumarin may include welts that look and feel like sunburn. But don't worry; furanocoumarins are never present in the parsnip roots. Before we dig parsnips we always wack off the greens off with machetes and rake them to one side. Your bunny isn't missing much.

Unfortunately a lot of people don't eat parsnips either and they don't know what they're missing. One reason for the paucity of parsnips in the diet of the average Californian is cultural. Before cane sugar and beet sugar were common, and before the potato was introduced to the West, many northern Europeans relied upon the parsnip as a principle starch and sweetener. Roasted parsnips were even fermented and elaborated into wines in the foggy northern countries where grapes didn't thrive. Nowadays cheap sugar and cheap wine are taken for granted.

Another reason parsnips aren't common in California is economic. Parsnips take a long time to grow. We planted the crop we're harvesting now last May; that's a lot of rent for 1 crop. Potatoes, by contrast, are fast to grow, simple to harvest, and easy to store. But as a small scale grower I need to look to niche markets to survive. Besides, I like parsnips. My children don't; or at least they thought they didn't. I faked them out by slicing the parsnips into French fry sized pieces, tumbling them in olive oil, salting them, and then roasting them in a baking pan until crispy and they went down well. I've also chopped parsnips into chunks and steamed them with potatoes, and then mashed it all together. I find that adding some parsnips to mashed potatoes gives the potatoes an herbal kick that's refreshing.

**What's Planned for the
Box This Week:**
Parsnips
Chantenay Carrots
Thyme
Lacinato Kale
Green Garlic
Hearts of Escarole &
Little Gem Lettuce
French Breakfast Radishes
Rainbow Chard
Calçot Onions

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Parsnip Photo by Andy Griffin

For more of Andy's writing, see his latest article in the [Ladybug Letter](#) at <http://www.ladybugletter.com/> posted this week.

Storage Tips: Give everything a quick rinse to remove dirt and then, everything in to the fridge. Carrots (topped; compost greens) & parsnips, store together in a plastic bag in crisper drawer. For all: remove rubber bands/twisty ties, rinse, shake, and store in plastic bag. Green garlic and calçot onions can be stored together. Remove greens from radishes; store greens separately from them. Greens should not be kept in the coldest drawer.

Parsnip Chips (From Chef Jonathan Miller)

I always consider peeling parsnips to be optional, and actually less preferred. However, if you do, treat yourself to some parsnip chips by frying the peelings in some oil. It's the best snack, but it doesn't last long! I also fry any cores that I remove from the parsnip. Those are a thicker, tasty treat.

peelings from 1lb parsnips
fry oil (grapeseed, canola, peanut)
salt

In a medium skillet heat a 1/4 inch layer of oil until very hot, but not smoking. Add the parsnip peelings, tossing well and continuously, and fry until lightly golden and crisp, about 2-3 minutes, depending on how thick your peelings are. Remove to a paper towel lined plate and drain. Immediately sprinkle with salt and serve immediately.

Braised Carrot "Shanks" (From Chef Jonathan Miller)

This is going to be a strange, but wonderful dish for those of you who do it. Here, carrots get treated like meat, specifically like a lamb or beef shank. It is surprisingly rich, but still fragrant and delicious. Cooking the carrots properly here is the key. They won't be special if there's any of that raw flavor remaining, but they can't be allowed to cook into mush. Keep an eye on them after about 40 minutes of braising. I especially like this with fat or giant carrots, as it makes a more dramatic presentation. For your herb bouquet, wrap the bay leaf and herbs in a whole leek green and tie them with kitchen string for easy retrieval later. Lastly, if you want to make this your entire meal, serve with a little parsleyed couscous, or go the traditional route with a risotto.

4 T butter
1 1/2 lb large carrots
1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
1 fennel bulb, chopped
1 garlic clove, smashed
1/2 lb tomatoes (canned ok), chopped
herb bouquet: 1 leek green, 1 bay leaf, 4 thyme sprigs, 6 parsley sprigs, tied together
1 thick orange slice, halved
1/2 c vegetable stock, preferably homemade
parsley

Heat the butter in a large casserole or dutch oven. Sear the carrots on all sides, browning well. Remove the carrots to a plate. Add the onion, fennel, and garlic and sauté until softened, about 8 minutes. Add the tomatoes, orange, the herb bouquet,

and some salt and pepper, and sauté another few minutes. Return the carrots to the saucepan, then pour in enough stock to reach no more than halfway up the sides of the carrots. Bring to a simmer, cover, and braise over very low heat until the carrots are tender all the way through, but not falling apart mushy, about an hour. Check for seasoning, remove and discard the herbs, then serve with some parsley sprinkled on top.

Chard Dahl (From *The Vegetable Book* by Spencer)

(Julia's note #1: I really like the simplicity of this recipe, and turmeric is one of the very healthy spices I've recently come to learn. I even take turmeric capsules each morning, but better to eat your vitamins when you can. I would finish this soup off with a dollop of yogurt and or a drizzle of toasted sesame oil.)

1/4 cup brown lentils
1 tbs. turmeric
1 bunch chard
1/2 cup orange lentils
salt and pepper

Lentils do not have to be soaked. Into 7 cups of boiling water, throw the brown lentils with the turmeric. Let simmer for 20 minutes. Add the chard and bring back to a boil. Simmer for 10 minutes more. Add the orange lentils and simmer for another 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. The lentils should have soaked up all of the water and can be served at once, though it will do no harm to let them rest in the warm pan. (Julia's note #2: You can find bulk turmeric and both colors of lentils at health food stores and Asian markets.)

Julia's Tuna and Radish Salad with Onions

2 tablespoons lemon juice
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1 pound radishes, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
3 Calçot onions or scallions, white and green parts, chopped
6 Kalamata or other large black olives, pitted, coarsely chopped
Two 6-ounce cans tuna, drained and coarsely mashed with a fork
1 head of little gem lettuce or 1 medium head romaine lettuce, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces

Whisk together the lemon juice, olive oil, and salt in a small bowl. Combine the radishes, parsley, scallions, olives, and tuna in a medium-size bowl. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to coat. Divide the lettuce leaves among 4 plates. Top with the tuna salad. Serve immediately.

Refried Beans with Leeks and Fennel

Sauté two large leeks (or baby leeks, onions or anything you have) and one large fennel head until they are soft and barely browning, then add cooked beans (I made them in a crockpot the day before, or use whole canned beans). These beans are over half veggies, a great way to get veggies into your meal if you're a bean taco kind of person. My goal is at least 8-10 servings of veggies per day. If you have anything left from last week's box, try this with some grated turnips, chopped leeks, grated carrot, chopped cilantro (can be used like a cooking green!)