



## Carrots

Buying bagged carrots rather than the exact amount needed for a meal, it's common to have a few left over with no purpose. These carrots might be left to go soft and spoil - but they are a superbly versatile vegetable which can lend itself to no end of tasty dishes.

### Olive Oil Carrot Cake

Olive oil adds a lovely fragrant flavour, giving the cake a whole new dimension. It's marginally healthier, too! This is such an easy recipe – everything is mixed with a spoon in one bowl.

175g light muscovado sugar  
175ml olive oil (not the fancy expensive stuff!)  
3 large eggs  
150g grated carrot  
100g sultanas  
80g pecan nuts, roughly chopped  
Zest and juice of 1 large orange  
175g self-raising flour  
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tsp ground ginger  
½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg  
A pinch of salt

#### For the icing:

100g soft butter  
300g cream cheese  
100g icing sugar  
Zest of 1 orange  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg, plus extra to decorate

Zest the orange and set the zest aside, then juice it into a small bowl. Add the sultanas and leave to soak for 15 minutes (longer if possible, but if you're short on time you can skip this step and omit the orange juice from the recipe). Pre-heat the oven to 160C. Grease and line a 20cm springform cake tin.

Beat the sugar, oil and eggs together with a wooden spoon in a large mixing bowl. Stir in the grated carrots and orange zest, plus the soaked, drained sultanas and pecans. Add the flour, bicarbonate of soda, spices and salt, then mix gently until everything is just incorporated (the mixture will be quite runny). Pour into the tin and bake for 40-45 minutes, or until the mixture springs back when pressed. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a plate and leave to cool.

For the icing, use an electric whisk to beat together the cream cheese, icing sugar, butter, orange zest, vanilla and nutmeg until smooth. Slice the cake in half horizontally and fill with half the icing, then spread the rest of the icing over the top of the cake. Grate over some extra nutmeg (I also like to decorate it with whole pecan nuts).

### Quick Pickled Carrots

These pickled carrots couldn't be easier to make, and are so versatile, providing delightful sweet-sour crunch alongside any meal. Try them tossed into salads, served alongside Japanese dishes or with your favourite south-east Asian curry.

2 leftover carrots, peeled and cut into matchsticks  
1 tsp salt  
5 tbsp rice wine vinegar  
1 tbsp caster sugar

Toss the carrots with the salt and put in a sieve over a bowl for 15 minutes or so – this will draw out the juices and firm up the texture. Rinse well and pat dry with kitchen paper. Heat the vinegar and sugar together in a small pan until the sugar has dissolved, then remove from the heat. Cool, then add the carrots and toss together. Leave for 15 minutes or so before eating, but they keep well in the fridge for a couple of days.