

## **Variety and nutrition in the winter months**

In the New England states, root vegetables are staples in winter cooking when there is no planting and harvesting in the fields. These cold weather vegetables can be categorized into:

- true roots (eg carrot, beet, turnip),
- tubers (yam, sweet potato, cassava),
- a form of modified stems (taro, potato), and
- bulbs (onion, garlic, fennel)

Outside of our region and around the world, root veggies serve as a main source of carbohydrates as compared to grains. Root vegetables are storage organs of the plant and store energy in the form of starches and sugar. Additionally, they are known for their high concentration of antioxidants: carotenoids in carrot and yellow sweet potato; red and yellow betalains in beets; anthocyanins in blue potato and purple sweet potato. Loaded with fiber and low in fat, these power vegetables are virtually without cholesterol.

Did you know? Potatoes can contribute significantly as a source of vitamin C where they are a dietary staple.

Many of these varieties get sweeter during a slow, low cook, as enzymes break down complex carbohydrates into simple sugars. It is one of the reasons why they complement meat dishes so nicely. They and also provide bulk in soups, stews, and curries.

They can keep well for weeks or even up to months in cool conditions. Add root vegetables for a satisfying and important component of your diet.