



# GINGER CARROT SOUP

A long day full of reality leaves most daily warriors feeling frazzled and stressed. Pile on regular battles against common colds, upset stomachs, athlete's foot and congestion. Everyone has their method of dealing, but some choose to find remedies that aren't stamped with an Rx. If your therapy and medicine come from the garden, meet ginger—it's your new all-natural pharmacist.

Ginger is the rhizome (the horizontal stem of a plant that is usually found underground) of the perennial herb *Zingiber officinale*. Asian civilizations have used ginger both medicinally and in cooking for thousands of years. Your mother used to take care of stomachaches with ginger ale, and flight attendants have supplied queasy travelers with the tummy-calming elixir as long as little white paper bags have occupied seat pockets. In the digestive system, ginger increases the pH level of stomach acid, which lowers gastric secretions and increases digestive enzyme activity, making it ideal for common digestive issues and effective against morning sickness and nausea.

A couple teaspoons of chopped ginger steeped in water creates an aromatic foot soak that combats athlete's foot, and its anti-microbial properties are helpful in the treatment of sores and wounds.

The addition of this strong antioxidant to the diet can increase circulation and reduce the severity of muscle spasms and cramps. Sipping a cup of ginger tea can improve a mood by calming nerves and soothing headaches while it is also said to reduce excessive perspiration, freshen breath and act as an aphrodisiac.

Aside from the seemingly endless list of positive natural medicinal attributes, this fascinating rhizome harnesses a powerfully piquant flavor that absolutely defines the dishes in which it is featured. The refreshing heat of ginger makes it a versatile ingredient that can be featured as a palate-cleansing intermezzo, a unique entrée or a different dessert. A sweet way of incorporating this ingredient into the diet is with crystallized ginger; slices of tender ginger are heated in sweet syrup and then lightly rolled in sugar. Dropping a piece into a cup of tea or simply snacking on a sweet slice is a rewarding way to treat yourself nutritionally. For winter, a steamy bowl of carrot soup can be dressed up with the fabulous flavor of ginger. The following recipe is a thick and creamy puree that can be made without dairy products. It keeps and freezes very well, and the quality of the soup will not suffer from repeated reheating.

## Ginger Carrot Soup Serves 6 to 8

2 lbs carrots  
4 cups of water  
1 tbsp butter or oil  
1½ cups chopped onion  
2 medium garlic cloves, minced  
2 tbsp freshly grated ginger  
1½ tsp salt  
½ tsp each: cumin, ground fennel,  
cinnamon, allspice and dried mint  
3-4 tbsp fresh lemon juice  
1 cup lightly toasted cashews  
Optional: buttermilk to drizzle on top

Peel and trim carrots and cut into 1-inch pieces. Place in a large saucepan with the water, cover, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat, and simmer until tender (about 10-15 minutes depending on the size of the carrots).

In a small skillet, heat the butter or oil, add onions and sauté over medium heat for about 5 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, salt and spices, and then turn heat to low and continue to sauté for another 8-10 minutes (until onions are soft). Stir in lemon juice and remove from heat.

Place all ingredients, including toasted cashews, into a blender or food processor in several batches. Transfer the puree into a saucepan and heat gently before serving. If desired, drizzle a bit of buttermilk over the top and garnish with a piece of crystallized ginger.

*Baby carrots provided by  
Melissa's Produce [www.melissas.com](http://www.melissas.com)*

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