

TABLE TALK

Fresh Picks: Japanese Turnips

Each week, we'll tell you the freshest thing to taste from Colorado farmers and chefs.

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We hope you're hungry!

This summer, we're highlighting a must-eat-right-now ingredient every week. This week? Japanese turnips. Turnips often get a bad rap, but these roots—especially the sweet Hakurei variety—deserve a chance in your kitchen.

Visit 5280.com/freshpicks2015 every week for tips on which ingredient you should be growing, buying, cooking, and tasting—all season long.

Japanese Radishes | Family: Brassica

From the Farmer: **Eric Skokan**, a true renaissance man who is a farmer, a [cookbook](#) author, and the chef-owner of Boulder's [Black Cat](#) and [Bramble & Hare](#), is such a fan of Japanese turnips that he grows three varieties at [Black Cat Farm](#). On the Hakurei variety, he says "I love them when I'm harvesting them. I love them when I cook with them. As a businessman, I wince when I buy the seeds; they are more expensive than gold. But they are worth it."

From the Chef: When the sweet and crunchy Hakurei are in season, **Dakota Soifer**, chef-owner of [Cafe Aion](#) in Boulder, regularly snacks on the raw vegetable. He also utilizes the greens "I find that if you sauté the greens with a little garlic and extra-virgin olive oil, and then at the end toss in turnip quarters, the mix of braised greens and just-cooked turnips is so lovely."

Good for You: Given that turnips are in the same family as cabbage and kale, it should come as little surprise that the vegetable offers a bevy of health benefits. The fiber-rich, low-calorie root is a good source of vitamin C and antioxidants; it also contains phytochemicals that may help fight and prevent cancer. The greens are even better for you: They offer a solid dose of calcium, iron, and potassium, as well as vitamins such as A, B, and K.

At the Market: To ensure sweetness, opt for turnips that are smaller in size (the roots' texture becomes tougher and woodier with age). When you get home, remove the tops and gently wash and store them separately. Young turnips do not need to be peeled

before eating, but make sure to rinse well under cold water.

Around Town: At [Lower48 Kitchen](#) in Ballpark, executive chef **Alex Figura** gives Japanese turnips the French radish treatment: He serves them raw with house-cultured butter and sea salt. He also confits the baby roots in duck fat, turns the spicy greens into pesto, and serves glazed Japanese turnips alongside braised lamb shoulder and **Fruition Farms'** sheep's milk yogurt.

In Your Kitchen: Take a page out of Soifer and Figura's playbooks and enjoy crunchy Japanese turnips raw or with a bit of good butter and salt. Shave them onto buttered bread and top with a drizzle of lemony vinaigrette (a riff on chef **Gabrielle Hamilton's** fantastic [shaved celery, fennel, and radish salad with buttered Vald on toasts](#)). You can turn the nutritious tops into pesto or salsa verde—they also stand up to pickling or saut ing with miso.

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