

Meal Essentials

(NAPSA)—When it comes to holiday menus, they are usually set in stone. So where does your creativity fit in? Think side dishes.

Side dishes don't just fill your plate—they're meal essentials, adding flavor, comfort and enough substance to stand in for the main dish at times. They also offer plenty of creative solutions to break out of a menu rut.

For example, try a simple dish featuring parsnips or rutabagas. When cooked, they look similar to mashed potatoes but the taste is much more interesting. And when paired with roasted, gingered pears, there's a pleasing surprise waiting to be discovered.

The secret to perfect roasting is to use canola oil because it can handle the searing heat of the oven. It's a great choice for appetizers, main and side dishes and desserts because its neutral taste allows the flavors of the dish to shine.

Parsnips with Roasted Gingered Pears

- 4 lbs. parsnips or rutabagas, peeled and cubed**
- 3 Tbsp. canola oil**
- 1½ Tbsp. fresh lemon juice**
- 1½ Tbsp. chopped fresh gingerroot**
- 1 tsp. honey**
- 4-5 medium-size firm Anjou pears (about 2¼ lbs.), divided**
- ⅓ cup almond milk**
- ¼ cup spreadable butter with canola oil**
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh thyme leaves**
- Salt and pepper to taste**
- 2 Tbsp. toasted, chopped hazelnuts, optional**



For a great-tasting side dish, pair pears with parsnips.

Boil parsnips in large saucepan until tender, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, heat oven to 400° F. Spray 15x10x1-inch baking pan with no-stick canola cooking spray.

Peel pears and cut in half; core. Cut one pear into 8 slices. Cube remaining pears. Combine canola oil, juice, ginger and honey in large bowl. Add pears; toss gently to coat. Spread onto prepared pan in single layer. Roast in oven until tender, about 30 minutes, gently turning pears every 10 minutes. Remove from oven; put sliced pears aside.

Drain parsnips; return to same pan. Add almond milk, spreadable butter and thyme; coarsely mash. Gently stir in pear cubes and any juices from pan. Season with salt and pepper.

Place in serving bowl and garnish with reserved pear slices and nuts. Serve warm.

Makes 8 to 10 servings.

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