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If you give them a chance, humble carrots can be inspiring. Their flavors fill a spectrum from sweet to earthy with hints of spice, and in their natural form—with healthy green tops cascading over the roots—they're marvelous in their beauty. But as much as we love carrots, we realized one day that most of our carrot tops end up in the trash. It turns out they're nutritious—a good source of potassium, chlorophyll, and vitamin K. But more importantly, there is wonderful flavor in those carrot tops—a sophisticated, earthy character with a hint of bitterness and herbal notes from the abundant chlorophyll. (Admittedly, they can be tough. But just use the leafy fronds, not the thicker stems, and chopping the greens helps.) Like their cousin parsley, carrot greens are a brightening, refreshing accent to other foods. Here are some ideas to help spark your own imagination.

- Carrot tops will cook beautifully; **wilted with a little bit of bacon and jalapeño** they are *delicious*. Or sauté them with garlic and onion, chop, then mix into fresh, salted ricotta cheese and you have a wonderful **ravioli filling** or, even easier, a topping for pasta.
- Mince a few handfuls of carrot tops in a food processor with garlic, salt, olive oil and toasted almonds for an incredibly flavorful, **vibrant green sauce**. We love this alongside roasted seafood, roasted vegetables or simply slathered on bruschetta with a touch of goat cheese. If you have a brûlée torch, you can also make a **smoky riff on chimichurri** sauce that will make anything you cook

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chives—with a touch of salt and vinegar at the last second—to make **aromatic herb salads**, a delicate but flavorful garnish for rich foods. Or, to give your green salads an intriguing, unusual character, try **mixing them directly with lettuces**. We also like to use them as a finishing touch for thinly shaved vegetables.

- If you have a juicer, we'll add a couple of ideas for the "normal" part of the carrot too. Juice the roots and greens separately. (There won't be a whole lot of liquid from the greens, but it will be flavor-packed.) We love to **simmer carrots in carrot juice**, then quickly finish them on the grill or seared in a hot sauté pan. They have an intense, sweet flavor, accented by a bit of smoke and caramelization. Our favorite pairing for this spectacularly simple dish are **beans finished with aromatics and carrot top juice**. Sweat some garlic and onions with a little crushed red pepper in olive oil, or, even better, in some bacon or chorizo fat. Add cooked or canned beans—any kind will do, though we prefer white beans—and a splash of water or stock with a shot of carrot top juice, and let simmer for about 10 minutes to combine the flavors. The green juice packs a definite carrot note, but with a grassy, herbal character and no sugar, which pairs with the sweet caramelized carrots to give you the full spectrum of carrot flavor.
- As a bonus, here's a **carrot-ginger vinaigrette** that's amazingly refreshing, especially when served drizzled over sweet melons or cold, sliced stone fruit. Simply mix together 4 parts fresh carrot juice to 1 part each lemon and ginger juices and use immediately for the freshest flavor.
- Have you ever seen those carrot cakes with a spot of **green frosting** to represent the tops? Well, why use flavorless food coloring when you can use the real thing? Puree a couple tablespoons of minced carrot tops in a food processor with 2/3 cup powdered sugar and an 8-ounce package cream cheese to make a sweet, creamy spread. Many cream cheese frosting recipes call for some butter for fluffiness and as much as three times the sugar; feel free to add either to your taste, but we like our carrot cake frosting this way—not too sweet, carrot, herbal, and green. It's a perfect topping for carrot cake, one that reminds you, just a little bit, that this is cake that's made from a vegetable!



#### **Aki Kamoza**

*Aki Kamoza is a partner in Ideas in Food: a blog, a book ([Ideas in Food, Great Recipes and Why They Work](#)), and a culinary consulting business based in PA. She believes that there's always something new to learn and passion is the key to creativity. Curiosity and cooking go hand in hand. It's all about creating the next great meal. Aki can be found at <http://www.ideasinfood.com>.*



#### **H. Alexander Talbot**

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