

Vale Middle School Reading Article

The Truth Behind Baby Carrots (1220L)

Instructions: COMPLETE ALL QUESTIONS AND MARGIN NOTES using the CLOSE reading strategies practiced in class. This requires reading of the article three times.

Step 1: Skim the article using these symbols as you read:

(+) agree, (-) disagree, (*) important, (!) surprising, (?) wondering

Step 2: Number the paragraphs. **Read** the article **carefully** and **make notes in the margin**.

Notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer's strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

Step 3: A final quick read noting anything you may have missed during the first two reads.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment. Answer the questions carefully in **complete sentences** unless otherwise instructed.

Student _____ Class Period _____

The Truth Behind Baby Carrots

Baby carrots have become a lunch box staple. Parents love them for their convenience and because they're seen as a healthy food choice. Kids love them because they're sweet and fun to eat. But what's the real deal behind baby carrots?

After all, they're not like regular carrots. They're perfectly shaped with rounded edges; they don't have the same thick core; and, even peeled, they're bright orange. And a quick Google search of baby carrots turns up some frightening information on how they're made and whether they're really "soaked in chlorine." What's up with that?

We decided to dig up the truth on baby carrots, and here's what we found. Most baby carrots sold in U.S. supermarkets are really what the industry calls "baby cuts" – made from longer carrots that have been peeled and cut into a smaller size. These carrots have been specifically bred to be smaller in diameter, coreless and sweeter than regular carrots. Bob Borda, a spokesman for Grimmway Farms, the world's largest carrot grower (it handles 10 million pounds every day), says that over the years the company has developed a hybrid that combines the best qualities from over 250 known commercial varieties.

"Naturally, you breed carrots to get the sweetest flavor and crunch," he told FoxNews.com. But baby carrots didn't start out that way. Prior to the mid-1980s, broken and misshaped carrots were discarded, leaving some farmers with as little as 30 percent of their crop to take to stores. Tired of throwing away perfectly good food, California carrot farmer Mike Yurosek took the carrots and used a potato peeler to reshape them into small pieces more suitable for quick munching. Yurosek purchased an industrial green bean cutter to quickly whittle the carrots into the familiar 2-inch portions we still see today — and their popularity took off.

*Notes on my thoughts,
reactions and questions as I
read:*

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Baby carrot products have been the fastest growing segment of the carrot industry since the early 1990s and are among the most popular produce items in the supermarket aisle – more than potatoes and celery, according to a 2007 USDA report. While Yurosek’s baby cut carrots have evolved, there has remained a persistent concern from some consumers over how they’re grown and processed.

In order to create thinner vegetables, baby carrots are planted closer together than traditional carrots. In as little as 120 days from planting, the carrots are dug up and trucked to the processing house to be cut and peeled. But before packaging, all carrots receive a brisk scrub accompanied by a chlorine bath. Wait, what? Chlorine, you say, as in the same chemical you put in your pools?

Borda says Grimmway Farms, whose labels include Cal-Organic, uses a chlorine solution on all its carrots – organic and non-organic -- to prevent food poisoning, before a final wash in water. Grimmway says the chlorine rinse is well within limits set by the EPA and is comparable to levels found in tap water. Ashley Bade, nutritionist and founder of Honest Mom Nutrition, says the chlorine bath is a standard practice in many pre-cut food items. “The chlorine-water solution is a needed step in the process to limit the risk of food-borne illnesses such as E.coli,” she says.

Yet the controversy over chemical rinsing has caused a minor uproar among organic communities and concerned parents wanting to rid their children’s lunchboxes of potentially dangerous chemicals. In fact, when FoxNews.com contacted Bolthouse Farms, the nation’s second largest carrot producer, spokeswoman Kathleen Corless said the company didn’t want to be interviewed for this story. “We don’t want to keep perpetuating the myth that baby carrots are dyed or bleached,” she said.

“I have had clients bring up concerns regarding baby carrots after some rumors about the processing of baby carrots involving ‘soaking them in chlorine or bleach,’” Bade said, adding that the carrots are safe to eat. The truth is that baby carrots are no different from packaged lettuce or any other prepared produce -- like bagged lettuce -- you find in the grocery store. Nutritionists say consumers concerned about the chlorine can just buy whole, unprocessed carrots and wash, peel and cut them themselves.

But Dr. Aruna Weerasooriya, researcher and professor of agricultural sciences at Prairie View A&M University, says a perhaps larger, less known health concern is how the manipulation of certain vegetables degrades their nutritional value. “When you look at wild carrots, they have high levels of Thymol, a phyto-chemical that is essential for the body to control bacteria and ward off viral infections,” he said. “Now, when you look at some of these new carrot breeds, this type of phytochemical just isn’t there.”

Weerasooriya believes that carrot companies are trading in nutritional value for increased convenience to the customer – and profit for themselves. “Research should focus on how to retain some of these nutrients, but instead companies are probably more concerned about a longer shelf life.”

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Comprehension questions – answers may be in phrases.

1. *Name the farmer who first created the baby carrot .*
2. *What device did the farmer in question one purchase that was used to make the baby carrots?*
3. *Define **staple** as used in the article*
4. *According to McCarthy, what is the fastest growing segment of the carrot industry?*
5. *Define **whittle** as used in the text.*

RI.1.4

2. Answer each question in one or more complete sentences.

What two attributes of carrots are the growers being accused of modifying by creating the perfect baby carrot?

For what reason did spokesperson for one carrot farmer refuse to be interviewed for this article?

What food items, aside from carrots, are rinsed in bleach to avoid food-borne illness, according to the text?

RI.1.3.4

Vale Middle School Reading Article

Students, Say Goodbye to Snow Days – and Say Hello to School at Home (1160L)

3. *The article discusses the controversial practice of rinsing carrots with chlorine. Discuss the pros and cons of using chlorine on carrots. In your opinion, is this a healthy practice, or is the practice risky? Explain in detail and cite evidence from the text to support your opinion.*

RI.8

4. *In one well-written sentence determine the author's purpose for writing this article.*

What evidence in the text was most helpful in determining the purpose?

Summarize the article in the space below.

RI.2