

HARVEST for HEALTH



BEETS!

Beet Facts

- Beets vary in color – from red, gold and white to the “candy cane” variety of red and white stripe.
- Although beets originated in prehistoric times, they didn’t become popular until the 16th century. At first, only the greens were eaten. The ancient Romans were one of the first civilizations to use beet roots as food.
- In the 19th century the first sugar beet factory was built in Poland. When access to sugar cane was restricted by the British, Napoleon decreed that the beet be used as the primary source of sugar.
- Beets have the highest sugar content of all vegetables, yet they are very low in calories.

Did You Know?

Beets’ color can change depending on the ingredients used while cooking. Acidic ingredients such as lemon juice or vinegar will brighten the color. Alkaline substances, such as baking soda, often cause beets to turn a deeper purple. Add salt only at the end of cooking, if needed, as it will dull the color.

Nutritional Value

Beets contain powerful nutrient compounds that help protect against heart disease, birth defects and certain cancers, especially stomach and colon cancer. Beets are particularly rich in the B vitamin folate. They are a very good source of manganese and potassium. Beets are also a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin C, iron, copper and phosphorus.

Selection & Storage

Beets are available year-round, but are most tender in June through October. Choose small or medium-sized beets that are unblemished, with leaves that are deep green and fresh if you plan to also cook the leaves. Cut off the tops, leaving 1 to 2” of stem attached. Do not trim the roots. Refrigerate unwashed leaves and beets in separate plastic bags for up to 1 week.

How to Prepare

Beets will bleed when bruised or pierced, or when the taproot is cut, so it’s easiest to peel after cooking. Since beet juice can stain your skin, wear kitchen gloves when handling. Cooked, unpeeled, beets can be kept for five days in the refrigerator.

To boil: Clean beets, but leave them whole with their root ends and one inch of stem attached. Boil until tender.

To roast: - Option 1: Preheat oven to 425°. Leave about 1/4” of green stem attached. Scrub and place in a baking dish or lidded casserole dish. Add 1/4” of water. Cover tightly. Place in oven and roast small beets (3 oz or less) for 30-40 mins; medium 40-45 mins, and large beets, 50-60 mins. Beets are done when easily penetrated with the tip of a knife. Remove from oven, allow to cool, then cut away the ends and slip off the skins.

To roast – Option 2: Wrap cleaned beet in a piece of aluminum foil. Bake one hour at 350-375° until fork tender. Remove, cool and slip the skin off.



Add More Beets to Your Life

- Beet greens can be prepared like spinach or Swiss chard. Try them sauteed in olive oil and garlic.
- Marinate cooked beets in fresh lemon juice, olive oil and fresh herbs.
- Combine peeled chunks of beet with other root vegetables, such as sweet potatoes and turnips, and roast in the oven.
- Grated raw beets are a colorful and healthy addition to salads, or as a garnish to just about anything.
- Top fresh spring mix or spinach with beets, bleu or feta cheese, sliced red onions, and walnuts or hazelnuts. Dress with balsamic vinaigrette.



Beet, Carrot & Ginger Soup

- 3 medium beets (about 1 pound)
- 1 TBL. canola or corn oil
- 1 c. chopped onion
- 1 lb. carrots, coarsely chopped
- 1 TBL. minced fresh ginger
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 6 c. water or vegetable stock
- 1 tsp. grated orange rind
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- freshly-ground black pepper to taste
- 4 tsp. low-fat sour cream (optional)

1. Under running water (this is very messy otherwise), peel the beets with a vegetable peeler. With a chef's knife, cut the beets in half, then lay them flat side down and cut into large chunks.
2. In a stock pot over medium heat, heat the oil. Sauté the onion until it is translucent. Add the carrots, ginger, and garlic. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add beets and water or stock. Simmer the soup, covered, for 50 minutes. Add orange rind, and stir well.
3. In a food processor or blender, puree the soup in batches. Stir in the salt and pepper and adjust seasonings to taste. Serve the soup hot or chilled, garnished with dollops of sour cream. Serves 4. 160 calories; 6g protein; 23g carbs; 5g fat; 450mg sodium; 0 mg chol. Recipe adapted from *Vegetarian Planet*, by Didi Emmons.



Beet Relish

- 1 lg. beet roasted in the oven, peeled and diced
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced thin and poached in white wine
- 2 TBL. diced red onion
- 1 TBL. virgin olive oil
- 1 TBL. white wine vinegar
- 3 basil leaves sliced thin

Toss together, season with salt & pepper. Makes a good accompaniment for salmon, chicken and lamb. Serves 4-6; 2 TBL each; 35 calories per serving; 1g protein; 3g carbs; 3g fat; 15mg sodium; 0mg chol.; <1g fiber.

Chocolate Beet Cake

- 2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1-1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1-1/2 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. cocoa powder
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 1 c. plus 2 TBL. vegetable oil
- 1-1/2 c. grated cooked beets
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- powdered sugar, optional

1. Combine flour, soda, salt, sugar and cocoa. Set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine eggs and oil. Beat in vanilla and continue beating until well blended.
3. Slowly beat in dry ingredients until well mixed; stir in beets.
4. Pour into a greased and floured 9x13-inch baking pan. Bake at 350° for 25-35 minutes, or until cake bounces back when touched lightly with finger. Cool in pan on a rack. Dust w/powdered sugar. Serves 16; 280 cal; 3g protein; 33g carbs; 2g fiber; 210mg sodium; 40mg chol. Recipe from *Southern Recipes Newsletter*, www.about.com.

Resources

Remember to look for low-fat recipes, or substitute high-fat ingredients with low-fat options.

Beet Recipes & Tips

- www.cookinglight.com
- www.allrecipes.com
- www.eatingwell.com
- www.whfoods.com

Cancer/Nutrition Websites

- www.cancerproject.org
- www.aicr.org
- www.cancer.net

Harvest for Health and **DEFEAT Cancer** are programs of **St. Charles Cancer Care**. DEFEAT Cancer is sponsored by the **Lance Armstrong Foundation** and supported by **Advanced Specialty Care**.

www.bendcancer.org & www.defeatcancer.info

We also thank **St. Charles Food Services – Cafeteria & Deli** for their assistance and support.

