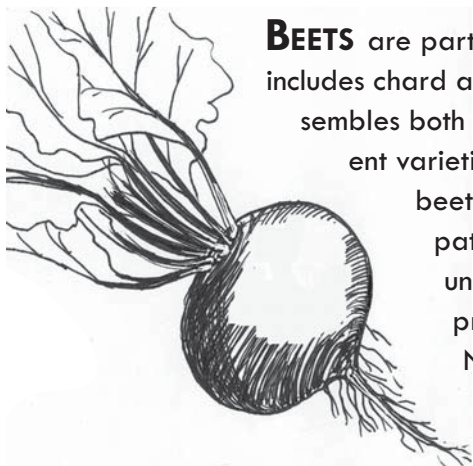


BEETS



BEETS are part of the Chenopodiaceae family, which includes chard and spinach. Beet greens have a taste that resembles both of these vegetables. There are several different varieties of beets including red, golden, and chiogga beets, which have a red and white striped bulls-eye pattern when sliced. About 8% of the beet is sugar, an unusually high percentage for a vegetable. Beets are processed commercially to produce refined sugar. In the Northeast beets are planted in the spring and are available all summer and fall.



STORAGE

- ◆ **Separate** beet greens from the roots, leaving 1-2 inches of stem still attached to the bulb.
- ◆ Store **roots and greens** separately.
- ◆ **Beet greens** can be wrapped in a damp paper or cloth towel and stored in a refrigerator drawer.
- ◆ **The roots** can be left uncovered in a refrigerator drawer or kept in a paper bag.
- ◆ Beet roots will keep for several weeks, but greens are best used right away.

PREPARATION

- ◆ Wash beet greens in plenty of water and cook as you would any tender greens such as spinach.
- ◆ Young beet greens can also be eaten raw. Try adding to **green salads** for an accent of color.
- ◆ Wash and gently **scrub beet roots** to remove dirt. Early in the summer the very young beets can be eaten with the skin on, but the matured beets will need to be peeled. Peel before or after cooking (the skin comes off much easier after cooking).
- ◆ Beets roots can be eaten raw as well as cooked. Try grating raw beets and adding to salads (good with grated raw carrot) or using as a **topping on tacos, burritos or tostadas**.
- ◆ Beets are sweet and earthy and are good combined with other root vegetables such as onions, carrots, potatoes, or celery root. Beets can be **roasted, steamed, grilled, boiled, and baked**. Good partners for beets include olive oil, vinegar, lemon, mustard, cilantro, curry, yogurt, sour cream.

Nutritional Information

Beet greens contain higher quantities of nutrients than the root bulbs. Beet roots are high in folate. A healthy diet with enough folate may reduce a woman's risk of having a child with certain birth defects of the brain or spinal chord. Beet greens are an excellent source of Vitamins A and C and a good source of iron and potassium. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction. Vitamin C is important in immune response, wound healing, and allergic reactions. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption. Phosphorus is important in bone health. Iron is important for healthy blood cells. Inadequate iron intake can lead to anemia.

Beet Recipes

Beet Salad with Apples & Raisins (Serves 4)

1 cup sour cream, low fat or non fat
2-3 teaspoons Dijon mustard
2-3 Tablespoons cider vinegar
3 small bunches of beets (3/4 pound) trimmed, peeled and grated using large holes on grater
3 sweet, crisp apples (like fuji, gala, honey crisp or braeburn etc), cored and cut into 1/2 inch cubes
5 Tablespoons golden raisins
3 Tablespoons toasted, chopped hazelnuts
3 Tablespoons chopped chives
Salt and pepper to taste



In a small bowl prepare dressing by mixing sour cream, mustard and vinegar and set aside. In a larger bowl combine beets, apples, raisins, nuts, and chives. Season with salt and pepper. Toss with dressing and serve.

Recipe adapted from FoodBook for a Sustainable Harvest, by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern, copyright 1994 by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern.

Roasted Beets (Serves 6-8)

3 pounds beets, washed, trimmed and cut into quarters (greens may be used in another recipe)
1/3 cup melted butter or olive oil
2 cloves garlic, pressed or chopped
1/2 teaspoon each of rosemary, savory, marjoram or whatever combination of herbs you like
Salt and pepper to taste



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a 9x13 inch baking pan, combine beets, butter or oil, garlic and herbs. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake for 1 hour, stirring occasionally, until tender when pricked with a fork. Remove from oven and serve immediately. This recipe also works well with a mixture of half beets and half new potatoes.

Recipe contributed by Kirsten Sauer, Just Food volunteer, 2001

Harvard Beets

2 bunches medium-sized beets, washed and trimmed
2 Tablespoons butter
1 Tablespoon cornstarch
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup cider vinegar
Dash lemon juice
Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves



In a large sauce pan, combine beets and cold water to cover. Bring water to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until beets are tender (30-50 minutes, depending on their size) Drain beets, but set aside 1 cup of the cooking liquid. Let the beets cool until they can be handled. Using your hands and a paper towel rub skins off the beets. Slice beets into 1/4 inch rounds, set aside. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter and whisk in cornstarch; mix until smooth. Slowly pour in reserved beet liquid and whisk until mixture thickens. Stir in sugar, vinegar, lemon juice, salt, pepper and cloves. Add the sliced beets to the and cook over low heat for 10-15 minutes or until heated through.

Recipe adapted from Urban Organics Today Newsletter, Vancouver, Canada, November 9-15, 1998.