

BEETS

Nutrition and Health

Red beets provide vitamins A and C, calcium and iron, and add fiber to the diet. A ½-cup serving of plain diced beets has 25 calories.

Selection

Select firm, round beets with a slender taproot (large main root). Any size of beet is acceptable, although beets over 3 inches may be more fibrous. Red beets should be deep red in color and smooth over most of the surface. If the beet becomes overmature, the texture becomes woody. Avoid wilted, flabby or rough beets. Don't be alarmed if the beet tops are wilted or decayed. The roots will still be satisfactory if firm.

Storage

Trim beet tops to ½ inch to reduce wilting. Beets may be stored in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for up to two weeks. (Cut small slits in bag to increase air circulation.) Beets will last up to four months when stored in a cold (32° to 40°F), humid root cellar or basement.

Preparation

For 1½ to 2 pounds of beets, cut off all but 1 inch of beet tops. Wash beets thoroughly. Leave small beets (1-2 inches in diameter) whole with root ends attached; cut larger beets into 1- to 2-inch pieces. Heat 6 cups of water, 1 tablespoon vinegar (optional, to preserve color) and 1 teaspoon salt to boiling. Add beets to water, cover, heat to boiling, then reduce heat and cook 35 to 45 minutes or until tender. Drain. Run cold water over the beets, slip skins off (if desired) and remove root ends. Slice, dice or leave whole, as desired. Serve buttered with salt and pepper. Try adding ½ teaspoon of the following fresh herbs or spices per serving of beets, alone or in combination: dill, caraway seed, bay leaf, cloves, basil, savory, mint, nutmeg, allspice, dry mustard, paprika and thyme.

Recipes

Harvard Beets

3 tablespoons cornstarch
⅓ cup sugar
½ teaspoon salt
1½ cups beet liquid (or beet liquid plus water)
2 tablespoons vinegar
1½ tablespoons butter or margarine
3 cups sliced, cooked beets

Mix cornstarch, sugar and salt. Blend in beet liquid, vinegar and butter. Cook over moderate heat, stirring constantly, until thickened. Add beets to sauce. Let stand for 10 minutes, if desired, to blend flavors. Heat to serving temperature. 6 servings

Easy Pickled Beets

3 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt
¾ teaspoon dry mustard
⅓ teaspoon ground cloves
½ cup cider vinegar
½ cup water
3 cups cooked beets
1 medium onion, sliced, optional

Mix first four ingredients in a plastic or glass bowl with lid. Stir in vinegar and ½ cup water. Add beets and onion; stir gently to mix well. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour (up to several days), stirring occasionally. Keep refrigerated up to two weeks.



Borscht

4 cups vegetable stock
1 cup diced beets, uncooked (about 1 medium-sized beet, peeled)
1½ cups diced potato
2 tablespoons butter
1½ cups chopped yellow onion (about 1 onion)
1-2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon caraway seeds
1 large carrot, peeled and thinly sliced
1 stalk celery, sliced
3 cups chopped red cabbage
1 cup tomato puree
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
1 tablespoon honey
¼ teaspoon chopped fresh dill
black pepper to taste

Toppings:

fresh tomatoes, diced
sour cream or Greek yogurt
additional fresh dill

In a large pot or Dutch oven, bring vegetable stock, beets and potatoes to a boil. Cover, reduce heat and simmer until tender, about 12 to 15 minutes. Drain, reserving the stock, and set aside.

In the same pot, heat butter over medium heat. Add onions, caraway seeds and 1 teaspoon salt, and sauté until the onion is translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Add carrot, celery, cabbage and reserved vegetable stock. Cover and simmer until all the vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in potatoes, beets and all remaining ingredients.

Cover and simmer on low heat for 30 minutes. Taste and add more salt if desired.

Serve immediately, topped with chopped fresh tomatoes, Greek yogurt or sour cream, and a sprinkle of fresh dill. 4 servings

Roasted Beets

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cover baking pan with foil and place beets in pan. Bake 1½ to 2 hours or until easily pierced to center with a fork. Peel when cool.

Red Cabbage & Beet Slaw

¾ cup plain fat-free yogurt
⅓ cup cider vinegar
¼ cup apple cider vinegar or juice
2 tablespoons reduced-fat mayonnaise
¾ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon celery seed
6 cups shredded red cabbage
2 raw beets, peeled and shredded
2 Granny Smith apples, diced
¼ cup minced red onion
¼ cup parsley
2 tablespoons minced chives

In a large bowl, whisk together the yogurt, vinegar, cider, mayonnaise, salt and celery seed.

Add the cabbage, beets, apples, red onion, parsley and chives, toss well to combine.

Cover and refrigerate the slaw until well chilled, about 1 hour. 4 servings

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04-00/RD/05-23

Revised July 2019