

Beets

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What's So Great about Beets?



- ▷ Beets are an excellent source of folate. Beets are good sources of potassium, vitamin C, and fiber.
- ▷ Beets are low in calories. As a vegetable, beets are fat and cholesterol free.
- ▷ Beets have a sweet flavor.
- ▷ Beets are most often sold in cans or jars. But they are also available fresh.
- ▷ Beets are inexpensive.
- ▷ Beets are great cold.

Selecting and Storing Beets

Beets are available all year long. Many beets are sold in bunches with the greens (leaves) still attached. Others are sold loose with the greens removed. Beets are most often sold in jars or cans. Beets in jars can be plain or pickled.

Look for

- ▷ Firm, round beets with a slender taproot (the root at the bottom)
- ▷ Rich, deep red color (if red)
- ▷ Smooth surface. If beets are bunched, look for bright and fresh greens. This shows that the beets are very fresh.

Avoid

- ▷ Long beets with round, scaly areas around the top surface. These beets will be tough, fibrous, and strongflavored.
- ▷ Wilted, flabby beets. These have been exposed to the air too long.

Storage

Cut off the greens, leaving an inch on the beet. Place the unwashed beets in a plastic bag. The roots will keep in the refrigerator crisper for up to 3 weeks. The beet greens should be used as soon as possible, as they will keep for only a few days. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper.

What is Folate, and Why is it Important?

Folate is a water soluble vitamin that occurs naturally in food. Folate helps make body cells. Folate and folic acid (a form of folate) have been found to prevent neural-tube (spinal) birth defects. Folate also helps to prevent heart disease and anemia. Beets are an excellent source of folate.



Varieties of Beets

Beets are also known as “beetroots.” Some of the common varieties of the garden beet include Detroit dark red beets, Lutz salad leaf beets, yellow beets, white beets, orange or golden beets, and Chioggia beets. Beet sizes range from large marbles to cylinders to the size of baseballs. Baby beets (younger beets) are more tender than regular beets and require less time to cook. Some common varieties of beets are pictured below.



<< Red beet

Red beets are the most common, having a deep red stalk and meaty root. Large leaves from red beets are often sold as “red chard” in the market.

Golden beet >>

Golden beets have the same taste, texture and shape as red beets, but are lighter colored.

<< Chioggia beet

Chioggia beets, also known as candy cane beets and or candy stripe beets, have a dark red outer skin covering and flesh of pink and white striped rings. This beet has a very sweet flavor.



Fitting Beets into MyPyramid



Beets are nutritious vegetables that can be included in most diets. The **GREEN** triangle of MyPyramid is the vegetable section. Vegetables may be raw or cooked, fresh, frozen, or canned. Age, gender, and level of physical activity determine the daily vegetable need. For a 2000 calorie diet, about 2 ½ cups of vegetables are recommended daily. For more information on vegetable serving sizes visit www.mypyramid.gov.

Nutrition Facts

1 cup Snap Beans

Serving Size 1 cup 136g (136 g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 58	Calories from Fat 2
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 106mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 13g	4%
Dietary Fiber 4g	15%
Sugars 9g	
Protein 2g	
Vitamin A	1% • Vitamin C 11%
Calcium	2% • Iron 6%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

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Preparation Tips

Scrub the beets very gently and rinse well. Be careful not to break the skin, which is quite thin. Leave at least 1 inch of stem. Do not trim the bottom root. Beets are done when they are easily pierced with the tip of a sharp knife. Once cooked, peel them. The skin of a cooked beet will slip right off. Use a paper towel or wear gloves to keep the beet juice from staining your hands. Cut off the stems and root after cooking.

Boiling

This is the most common way of cooking beets, but some of the color (and nutrients) will be lost in the cooking water. Place beets in a pot of boiling water, cover, and simmer until the beets are tender. Cooking time is 40 minutes to 2 hours, depending on size.

Baking

Baking locks in nutrients and intensifies the sweet flavor of beets. Baking beets takes a long time. To save time, cook a large quantity of beets at once. Chill leftovers for later use in salads.

- ▷ Wrap beets in foil, place them in a baking pan, and bake in a 350°F to 400°F oven until tender.
- ▷ Unwrap and let stand until the beets cool enough to handle. Peel them while still warm.
- ▷ Cooking time is 1 1/2 to 2 hours, depending on size.

Peeled beets can be sliced. Layer them with thinly sliced onions or apples in a casserole. Add a little broth or stock to keep the beets moist and cover tightly. Then bake/braise. Cooking time is 30 to 60 minutes.

Microwaving

Place one pound of whole beets in a microwavable dish with 1/4 cup of liquid. Cover and cook until tender. Cooking time is 10 minutes.



Canning

- ▷ Cool cooked beets in cold water or ice water.
- ▷ Carefully rub peel away and trim the stem and root.
- ▷ Pack into clean, hot jars, leaving 1 inch head space.
- ▷ Add 1/2 teaspoon salt to pints; 1 teaspoon to quarts, if desired.
- ▷ Fill jars to 1 inch from top with boiling water. Use a rubber spatula or plastic knife to remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process.
- ▷ Process pints for 30 minutes and quarts for 35 minutes. Process in a Dial Gauge Pressure Canner at 11 pounds pressure. In a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner cook at 10 pounds pressure.

Freezing

Cool cooked beets in cold water or ice water. Carefully rub peel away and trim the stem and root. Cut into slices or cubes. Place in an airtight container, leaving 1/2 inch of air. Seal and freeze for up to one year.

Steaming

Beets can be cooked in a steamer over boiling water. Small beets can be steam-boiled with their leaves attached in a little water with lemon juice and herbs added. Cooking time is 40 minutes.

Recipe Collection

Crisp Beet Salad

Makes 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups beets (fresh or canned)
- 4 potatoes
- 1 cup peas (fresh or frozen)
- 3 eggs, hard boiled
- 1 apple
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 3 Tablespoons vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook (if fresh), peel, and dice beets. Set aside.
2. Boil the potatoes in 2 cups of water in a deep kettle. Cover and cook over moderate heat for about 20 minutes, until the potatoes are tender.
3. When thoroughly cool, dice potatoes and place in a big bowl.
4. Add diced beets and mix with the potatoes.
5. Set aside 1/4 cup of peas for garnishing and add the rest to the bowl.
6. Save 1 egg to use as a garnish. Chop the rest and add to the bowl.
7. Peel the skin off the apple and remove the core. Cut the apple into small pieces, place in a small bowl and sprinkle with lemon juice. Add apple to the salad.
8. Add the vinegar, olive oil and sugar.

Simple Borscht* Soup

*pronounced: borsh. Makes 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 6 medium beets (canned or fresh), peeled and chopped
- 2 cups beef stock salt and freshly ground pepper
- Heavy cream (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Warm olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Stir in onions and garlic. Cook until soft but not browned. Stir in beets. Cook for 1 minute.
2. Stir in beef stock. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; cover, and simmer until the beets are tender. This will take 20 to 30 minutes. Remove mixture from heat. Allow it to cool slightly.
3. In batches, add soup to a food processor. Blend (pulse) until liquid. Return soup to saucepan. Gently heat through.



Harvard Beets

Makes 6 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 4 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1/3 cup white vinegar
- 1/3 cup water
- 2 (15 ounce) cans sliced beets, drained
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a saucepan, combine the sugar, cornstarch, vinegar and water. Bring to a boil, and cook for 5 minutes.
2. Add the beets to the liquid, and simmer for 30 minutes over low heat.
3. Stir in butter, salt and pepper and remove from the heat.
4. Serve warm or chilled.



Nutrition Facts

1 cup Salad

Serving Size (281g)	
Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 60
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 7g	11%
Saturated Fat 2g	8%
Cholesterol 95mg	32%
Sodium 320mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 41g	14%
Dietary Fiber 6g	24%
Sugars 10g	
Protein 8g	
Vitamin A 6%	Vitamin C 30%
Calcium 4%	Iron 15%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

Nutrition Facts

1 cup Borscht Soup

Total Calories	.....229
Calories from Fat	.....148
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 16.4g	.....25 %
Saturated Fat 5g	.....25 %
Cholesterol 20mg	.....7 %
Sodium 243mg	..... 10 %
Potassium 539mg	.....15 %
Total Carbohydrates 17g	.....5 %
Dietary Fiber 4.2g	.....17%
Protein 4.8g	.....10%
Sugars 10.9g	
Vitamin A	.....11 %
Vitamin C	.....26 %
Calcium	..... 6 %
Iron	.....14 %

Nutrition Facts

1/2 cup Beets

Total Calories	.....185
Calories from Fat	.....53
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 5.9g	..... 9 %
Saturated Fat 3.6g	.....18 %
Cholesterol 16mg	.....5%
Sodium 347mg	.....14%
Total Carbohydrates 33.7g	.....11%
Dietary Fiber 1.7g	.....7%
Protein 1g	.....2%
Sugars 30.1g	
Vitamin A	.....5%
Vitamin C	.....7%
Calcium	.....2%
Iron	.....18%

Grow Your Own Beets

Beets can be planted in the garden 30 days before the first frost-free day. Depending on where you live, the first frost-free day can be from April 16th-June 1st. The beet “seed” is actually a cluster of seeds in a dried fruit. Several seedlings may grow from each fruit. Plant seeds about 1/2 inch deep and one inch apart. Allow 12 to 18 inches between rows. Thinning the leaves by hand is almost always necessary. The seedlings should be thinned to 1 to 3 inches apart. Weed frequently. Beets do not grow well when near weeds.

Beets have shallow roots. Be careful when weeding. Like most root crops, beets need a fertile soil (especially high in potassium) for growth. Beets can be harvested whenever they grow to the desired size. About 60 days are needed for beets to reach 1 1/2 inches in diameter. This size of beet is used for cooking, pickling or canning as whole beets. Beets can grow to 3 inches. Beets larger than 3 inches may become tough and fibrous. For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service at 202-274-7125.



Did you know?

Beet greens can be eaten?

Beet greens (leaves) are very nutritious and delicious! They are an excellent source of vitamins A and C, potassium, and magnesium. Beet greens are a good source of calcium, iron, and copper. Chard is a member of the beet family which includes Swiss chard, leaf beet, spinach beet, silver beet, seakale beet, or white beet. Chard produces broad leaves rather than a large round root. The leaves are eaten for their tender texture and mild flavor. The leaf and stalk can be eaten raw.

Keeping the Color

Do not cut or peel beets before cooking them in liquid. This preserves beets' color and nutrients. If cut, the beets will “bleed” red juices while cooking and the juice will turn to a dull brown.

Beet Size

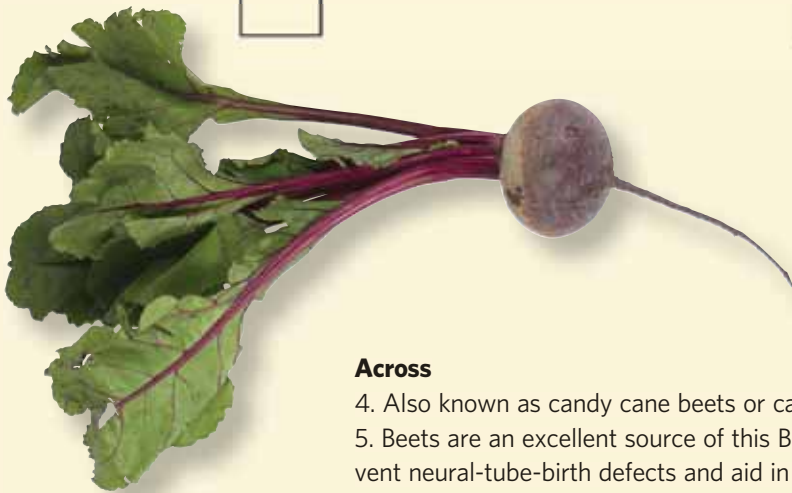
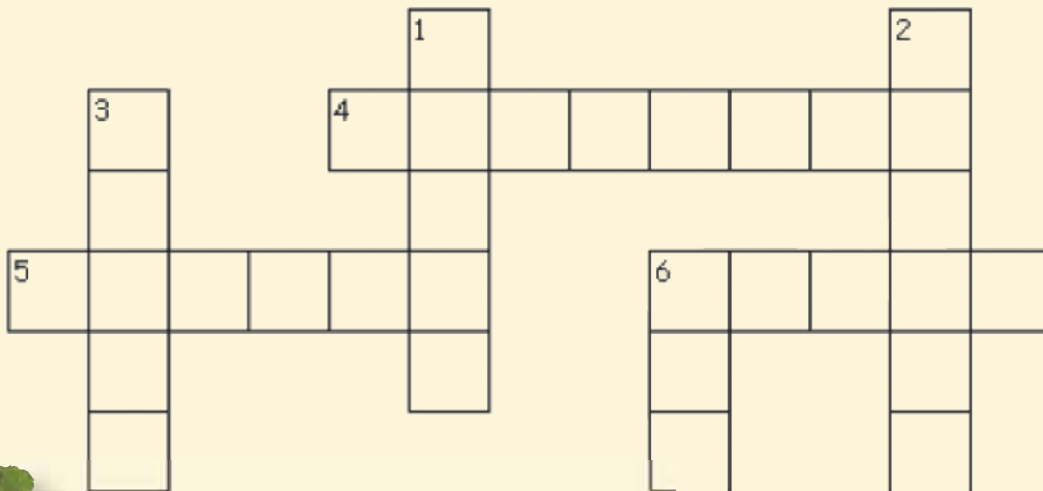
The size of beet determines if and how it should be cooked. Small beets that are less than 1 1/2 inch round are excellent raw in salads. Medium and large-size beets are good for cooking. Very large roots are too tough and woody for eating.



ACTIVITY ALLEY

Beets Cross Word Puzzle

Directions: Answer the clues to test how much you've learned about beets.



Across

- 4. Also known as candy cane beets or candy stripe beets.
- 5. Beets are an excellent source of this B vitamin. It has been found to prevent neural-tube-birth defects and aid in the fight against heart disease and anemia.
- 6. The beet "seed" is actually a cluster of seeds in a dried _____.

Down

- 1. Beet roots will keep in the crisper of the refrigerator for _____ weeks.
- 2. _____ locks in nutrients and intensifies the sweet flavor of beets.
- 3. If you cut beets before cooking, the color of the juices will turn _____.
- 6. Beets are _____ and cholesterol free.

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