

Beets are Beautiful – Inside and Outside

By Barbara Brown



With the color of a fine Burmese ruby, beets can be the jewel of your plate presentation as either a focal point or by providing visual contrast to white and green vegetables. And that is just the beginning of the beet's value to you and your family. Beets are an excellent source of the B vitamin, folate, with one serving providing 35% of the recommended daily requirement. Folate helps maintain normal levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that has been associated with increased risk of heart attack, stroke, and dementia. Folate is especially good for pregnant women. Beets are also a very good source of manganese and potassium and a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin C, magnesium, iron, copper and phosphorus. WOW!

The wild beet, the ancestor of the beet we eat today, is thought to have originated in prehistoric times in North Africa. People initially ate only the beet leaves removing the small and tough root. In Roman times, beet root was used as a medicine. By the 16th century, selective breeding produced an edible beet root used in soups and salads. The beetroot is what we commonly think of today as "beets". Both the beet root and leaves are packed with essential nutrients.

Beets can be stored unwashed in the refrigerator crisper for two to four weeks. Cut the leaves from the root leaving about two inches of the stem attached. You can eat the greens leaves and the beet roots separately or combine them in a meal. Beet tops or greens can be used raw in your juicer, sautéed or simmered as you would any other green. Beets (beet root) may be boiled or roasted and served warm, cold, or pickled. Below is a recipe for roasted beets that your family will surely enjoy.

Beets with Blue Cheese and Walnuts

Ingredients:

6 beets (1 ½ to 2 lbs)	3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar	½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon fresh ground pepper	2 tablespoons orange zest
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil	8 ounces blue cheese
1 cup chopped walnuts	

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a small bowl, combine vinegars, salt and pepper. Stir in orange zest. Using a whisk, add olive oil and blend well. To roast the beets wrap them individually in aluminum foil and place in a roasting pan. Bake until tender – about 1 ½ hours and let cool. Remove from the foil and gently rub off the skin. The skin will peel easily and does not require a grater. Slice beets into about ¼ inch slices. While beets are still warm, place in serving bowl and add vinegar mix – tossing gently. Crumble the blue cheese and walnuts on top. Serve warm or at room temperature.