Beets

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USU Student Organic Farm

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Featured Vegetable: Beets

The beet is such a unique vegetable. They are packed full of nutrients, including folate, manganese, potassium, vitamin C, copper, magnesium, iron, phosphorus, and fiber. Besides all these vitamins and minerals, beets are full of betalains, which act as potent cancer fighters. Betalains are also what gives beets their intense purple color.

Beets are part of the Chenopodiaceae family, which includes Swiss chard, cacti, amaranth, and venus fly traps (which is pretty odd). They have two edible portions: the root and the leaves so be sure to eat both. The sweet, earthy flavor is wonderful raw or cooked.

Storing and Preparing

To store, cut the greens off the tops of the root. Leave about an inch or so of the greens to avoid bleeding of the beet juice. Place roots in a plastic bag in the coolest part of the refrigerator. They should last about three weeks. The beet greens should be eaten within a couple of days. Store in a separate plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Beets can be eaten raw, baked, steamed, pickled, and served as a condiment or alongside soups, salads, and entrees. Peeling is easiest after cooking. Be sure to wear gloves when peeling to minimize red stains on your hands. If your hands do become stained, rub some lemon juice on the stain to remove. Or, if you want to avoid being stained all together, try the recipe below.

Beets aren’t as hardy as they look. The smallest bruise or puncture will cause their red-purple pigment to bleed, especially during cooking. Since betalain pigments are highly water soluble, it’s important to avoid damaging the beet to keep as much of this strong antioxidant as possible in the vegetable for eating. Keeping cooking times short will also help keep betalains from leaching out.

Beet greens are very similar to Swiss chard and spinach and can be prepared similarly to these vegetables.

Beets Baked in Foil

This is the single best method for cooking beets or any other root vegetable. It’s super easy because all you do is wrap them and throw them in the oven. Once they are done, you can eat them right away or store them in the fridge until you are ready to eat. Use within 2 days.

4 large or 8 medium beets, about 1 ½ to 2 pounds
1-2 Tbsp butter or olive oil

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Wash the beets well. Wrap them individually in foil and put them on a cookie sheet or roasting pan.
2. Cook, undisturbed, for 45 to 90 minutes, until a thin-bladed knife pierces one with little resistance (they may cook at different rates; remove each one when it is done).
3. Put butter or olive oil (enough to cover the bottom) in a skillet over medium heat. When the butter is melted or the oil is hot, add the vegetables, raise the heat to medium-high, and cook, stirring, until hot, just a couple of minutes. Top with your choice of sauce, herbs, spices, or vinaigrette and serve.

Recipe from: “How to Cook Everything Vegetarian” by Mark Bittman

Conquering the Bounty

Here are some ideas for beets when you don’t know what to do with them.

- Peel, cube, put in a foil packet with olive oil, salt and pepper, and toss in the oven until tender.
- Boil or steam, peel the beets under running water, slice into bite-size wedges or thick matchsticks, and drizzle with a vinaigrette while they are still warm. The beets will absorb a lot of flavor this way.
- Pair cooked beets (any cooking method) with feta and mint drizzled with a vinaigrette. The salty feta cheese provides a nice contrast to the beet flavor.
- Slice roots in half, chop the leaves, and sauté both in a pan with garlic and oil.
- Grate and toss with plain yogurt, mint, lemon juice, and salt/pepper for a tasty lunch.
- Shred raw, peeled beets into your next salad.

For long-term storage, you can freeze cooked beets. Beets are fabulous pickled (see “June 13th-radishes” newsletter) and canned as well.
Organic Techniques: Growing Sprouts

Sprouts are delicious on sandwiches, in stir-fries, and in salads. They are super cheap and super easy. Here is a step-by-step guide on how to grow your own sprouts at home.

1. Buy some sprouting seeds. They are available locally at Shangri-La health food store. Alfalfa sprouting seeds are my favorite. Mung beans work well too.

2. Find a mason jar with a screw-on ring. Put about 1 Tbsp of small seeds (like alfalfa) or 4 Tbsp of beans or large seeds (like mung) in the jar.

3. Place a piece of cheesecloth or panty hose over the mouth of the jar and screw the ring over it to hold the material securely in place.

4. Rinse the seeds by filling the jar with water, gently swirling, and then draining through the screen you just made.

5. Soak the seeds in jar in room temperature water overnight. In the morning, pour off the water in the jar and rinse again.

6. Place jar in a dark place. Prop your jar at an angle, screen down, to ensure proper ventilation.

7. Rinse and drain your sprouts thoroughly twice a day with cool, fresh water. After about 3-5 days sprouts will be about 3” in length and they can be eaten. Place sprouts in indirect light for 2-4 hours to develop green coloration.

Word of warning: If instructions aren’t followed closely, bacteria will grow and may cause foodborne illness.

For more information about the USU Student Organic Farm or CSA shares visit:
www.usu.edu/organicfarms

ANNOUNCEMENTS
We’re still giving out kohlrabi, golden cherry tomatoes, and peppers as they grow! We’re keeping track of who gets them to be sure everyone gets an equal share.

Strawberry days are over :( We might have more in the fall, but we will keep you posted.

Volunteer hours:
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 7am-2pm
Wednesday, Saturday: 10am-2pm

On the Farm News

Grilled pizza night was great! Thank you to everyone who came and brought amazing toppings. Luckily the weather was beautiful, even though it was threatening to rain earlier in the day. I think we all would like to thank Bob, our student farm volunteer for the dough. That was some of the best dough I’ve ever tasted!

Summer squash is coming on fast! We have a few different varieties just to keep things interesting, including green and yellow zucchini, magna, and crookneck. If you haven’t received one variety and you would like to, just let us know.

Tomatoes are looking amazing! They are still green but are getting bigger and bigger. Some are even starting to turn red. Golden nugget tomatoes are about to go out of season, but then we will have some red cherry tomatoes coming on. We also have slicing tomatoes growing. The eggplants all of a sudden decided to grow! They are a Japanese eggplant variety and look beautiful. Carrots will be coming on soon as well.

Veggies to expect next week: lettuce, summer squash, chard, kale, green onions, radishes, some tomatoes, some kohlrabi, and some peppers

Fabulous Flavors: Tips & Techniques

Herb Pairings

If you are ever at a loss for what herb to use for what, join the club. This list gives some helpful guidance as to what herbs go well with what foods. All of these herbs are usually available at our farm (we don’t have oregano, but marjoram is a good substitute).

Basil - Artichokes, beef, blue cheese, coconut, eggplant, figs, garlic, leafy vegetables, mint, mushrooms, olives, oregano, parsley, peppers, poultry, raspberries, rosemary, seafood, thyme, tomatoes

Chives - Asparagus, BEETS, blue cheese, chervil, dill, eggs, horseradish, leafy greens, mushrooms, olives, pasta, parsley, potatoes, seafood, tarragon

Cilantro - Avocados, beef, chiles, citrus, coconut, coriander, corn, cumin, curry, dates, fennel, figs, garlic, mint, oregano, pepper, sausage, seafood, tomatoes, yogurt

Dill - Anise, BEETS, blue cheese, cabbage, caraway, carrots, chives, cucumbers, fennel, figs, garlic, mint, oregano, parsley, potatoes, seafood, tarragon, tomatoes, veal, yeast bread

Oregano - Artichokes, basil, beans, beef, blue cheese, cinnamon, cumin, eggplant, fennel, garlic, mushrooms, nuts, parsley, pasta, poultry, seafood, squash, thyme, tomatoes, veal

Parsley - Artichokes, asparagus, basil, bay, beans, beef, chervil, chives, dill, game meats, garlic, mushrooms, greens, onions, oregano, pasta, potatoes, poultry, seafood, thyme, tomatoes

Rosemary - Apples, asparagus, basil, beans, beef, blue cheese, caramel, citrus, cranberry, game meats, garlic, greens, fennel, figs, mushrooms, nuts, onion, oregano, parsley, potatoes, poultry, raisins, sage, seafood, sugar, thyme, tomatoes

Sage - Anchovy, capers, citrus, cranberry, beef, blue cheese, game meats, garlic, green beans, lavender, mushrooms, nuts, parsley, plums, poultry, rosemary, seafood, thyme, veal

Thyme - Artichokes, bananas, basil, bay, beans, blue cheese, carrots, chervil, citrus, cranberry, dates, dill, figs, mint, mushrooms, nuts, onion, oregano, parsley, potatoes, poultry, raisins, sage, seafood, stone fruit, tomatoes

Source: www.suite101.com