Red is for Health

Andrew Croft

Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/student_orgfarm

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/student_orgfarm/80

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Plants, Soils, and Climate at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in USU Student Organic Farm Newsletter by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact rebecca.nelson@usu.edu.
Red is for Health

I feel like I say this about every vegetable I write about, but I really love beets. And I’m not just saying that. Beets are easily in my top three, and that’s saying something after many years of trying dozens of new vegetables at my community garden plot. I didn’t even know if I’d like them; beets were never served fresh at my house. My mother avoided them like the plague, not because she didn’t like the flavor, but because she developed an aversion to them when she was young. They served a canned, nasty version at her elementary school, and she’s hated the round, magenta roots ever since. After I finally tried a fresh beet at the age of twenty (!) and discovered a favorite vegetable, I made it a point to bring some to her. How the roles had changed! Now the child was getting the parent to try just “one little bite.” And hey, she liked them! Well, she said so anyway.

But how could someone hate this veggie? Earthy and deliciously tender, beets possess the highest sugar content of any other vegetable. It may sound strange, but sometimes, I get the faintest hint of chocolate. If there’s a veggie that deserves more love, it’s this poor thing.

Those deep colors aren’t just for show. That dark shade indicates, like many other deeply colored vegetables, the wealth of nutrients found inside. It would be an oversimplification to say beets are the most nutrient-packed vegetable, because different veggies have different strengths, and each has a different spectrum of vitamins and minerals. Beets, however, come close. Their nutrient profile, and particularly the antioxidants involved, are profuse and unique. Where the vast majority of red or purple vegetables are colored with anthocyanin, beetroots are flushed with color from betalain antioxidants, and these substances, named after the Latin name for beets, “Beta,” provide the nerve system and eyes with extra protection. They also bind to toxins, enabling the body to flush them out in the detoxification process. Liver health, cardiovascular health, and even one study showing improved performance during exercise are just a few more of the amazing benefits found in beets.

The leaves are also rich in minerals, and are almost as yummy as the root itself. Some beets were grown and selected specifically for their leaves, and eventually became what we know as Swiss chard today. This leaf variety is the older variation of the plant. The large roots we know today probably arose in the sixteenth century, but it was only after French chefs recognized their potential in the 1800’s that beetroot began to really catch on and diversify. They can now be found in red, purple, yellow, and banded varieties, Which look like little targets when cut, complete with concentric rings of red and white.

They’re not hard to prepare, but be ready for the purple juice that stains everything. Even your tongue might be magenta for a while after eating them. The best way to preserve the nutrients is to cook the beets whole, either steaming until tender, roasting in the oven, or grating them raw over a salad. Simply cut the leaves about an inch from the top, leave the root, and cook. The skin slips away easily after cutting off both the top of the beet and the taproot. At this hot time of the year, you might consider trying a cold and colorful borscht soup that comes out of eastern Europe. Happy Eating!

Andrew Croft

Roasted Beets with Sautéed Greens and Goat Cheese

Ready in: 1 hr 15 min
Serves: 4

Ingredients
3 large beets with tops
3 cloves garlic
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup white wine or water
3 tablespoons goat cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions
1. Preheat the oven to 350 degree.
2. Remove beet greens and then rinse the beet and the greens thoroughly.
3. Wrap each beet loosely in tin foil and place in the oven for 1 hour.
4. Add olive oil to a pan and put to medium heat.
5. Sauté garlic in the hot pan for about 2 to 3 minutes.
6. Add whole beet greens and wine/water to the hot pan and sauté until the leaves are wilted, about 3 to 5 minutes.
7. Remove beets from the oven and allow to cool for 10 minutes.
8. Remove the skin and slice into bite sized chunks.
9. Crumble the goat cheese.
10. Toss the greens and beet root pieces together with the goat cheese.
11. Add salt and pepper to taste.
12. Serve and Enjoy!

recipe by Shannon Babb
On the Farm News
Meet Andrew

As all of you may already know, we who work as “on-farm” interns work through AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a program of CNCS (Corporation for National and Community Service), a federal agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. However, we do not work alone. We are accompanied through are work by “outreach” interns. So we extend are gratitude to Andrew Croft. As an “outreach” intern Andrew is an essential addition to our farm and our team.

Andrew is currently studying Plant Science and Cropping Systems at USU and has maybe three semesters left. Andrews’s goals with his outreach work have been to get people excited about plants and help provide the proper information about plants. He has done this perfectly, as his work with us has primarily been teaching young kids on the farm and writing beautifully for our newsletter.

Growing up as part of a community garden, Andrew has had a strong connection to plants, people, and to the community. Andrew’s drive that fuels his work, is to share his strong connection of community, which he knows is fun, extremely good, and needed for people. In the future Andrew would like a nursery working mainly with native plants, where he can continue to share his love and expertise of plants with his community.

Andrew thanks so much. We have all appreciated all your intelligence and hard work, which you have so willingly shared.

Eric Manrique

---

What you might see in your next box

- lettuce
- kale
- chard
- tomatoes
- peppers
- cucumbers
- zucchini
- beans
- carrots
- corn
- basil
- potatoes
- leeks
- melons

---

Andrew harvested all the lovely tomatoes in your box.

Our unique and colorful beets!