



An equal opportunity/access/affirmative action/
Pro-disabled and veteran employer
Funder in part by the USDA

Contact: Denise Sullivan
Nutrition & Health Education Specialist
MU Extension-Jackson County
816-482-5850
sullivanand@missouri.edu

Date April 10, 2020

Plants on Your Plate – Beets

As I visited with friends about vegetables, it seems that beets are another sorely misunderstood vegetable. Growing up at my house, I remember having them one of two ways: cold as pickled beets (that I still enjoy) or hot in a thickened vinegar laden sauce that my mom called Harvard Beets, of which I was not a fan. A quick google search will confirm that Harvard Beets are essentially hot pickled beets, a concept that is difficult for my brain to process. Thanks, but I'll take my pickles cold.

There is a lot to eat when it comes to beets, as the root, stem and leaf all can be prepared in a variety of ways. The tops, known as beet greens, can be prepared like any other green by sautéing, or if young and tender enough, as a salad green. The stems of the beet plant can also be diced and added to the sautéed greens; much like preparing Swiss chard. The beet is the bulbous taproot of the plant. The size of the beet is dependent upon the space available to develop, as is the case with most root vegetables. Beets will have the best flavor and be less fibrous if they are smaller than 3 inches in diameter. To make use of both the greens and the beet, they are best separated and stored separately. The greens should be 'soaked and swished' to remove dirt, drained, wrapped in paper towels and stored in a perforated plastic bag. The beet should be stored in a perforated plastic bag and washed prior to cooking and peeling the skins after cooking.

Beets are an excellent source of folate, manganese, iron and riboflavin, while the greens are rich in vitamin A, C, K, calcium and potassium. This nutrient profile makes beets beneficial in maintaining healthy blood circulation and pressure, bone strength, and neural tube development in developing babies. Beets also show promise in reducing inflammation. Beets range in color from deep purple to ruby red to golden to white. There is even a red and white striped variety, nick named the candy cane beet. Sugar beets are the most common type white beet.

People often avoid beets due to their tendency to stain utensils (and clothing), but the deep color is actually desirable use a natural food dye. Purple and red beets also have a stronger flavor, so golden beets would be a milder flavor choice. Preparation methods can also have an influence on flavor. Boiling is the easiest and most common method of preparation, but also results in the strongest flavor. Roasting tends to mellow the flavor and bring out more of the natural sweetness, as is common with root vegetables.

While Julia Child is quoted as saying she is a 'beet freak who cooks them in a pressure cooker', roasting is my preferred method for cooking beets (if I'm not pickling them). The recipe below is my copycat version of one of my favorite restaurant salads that combines roasted beets, oranges and avocados with arugula for a colorful springtime salad. I hope you enjoy it too!

Roasted Beet, Orange and Arugula Salad

- 8 beets (2 inch diameter)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 oranges (1 for juicing)
- 2 avocados, peeled and sliced
- 4 cups arugula
- 4 ounces goat cheese
- ¼ cup pecans, toasted
- 6 ounces plain yogurt
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon poppy seeds

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Scrub beets and remove stems if not already done. Coat beets with olive oil and wrap each beet in foil. Place on baking sheet and roast for 50-60 minutes until tender. Remove from foil and let cool. While beets are roasting, peel 2 oranges and separate into sections. Squeeze remaining orange to yield ¼ cup juice. For dressing, combine yogurt, orange juice, honey and poppy seeds; refrigerate. When beets are cool enough to handle, peel and slice. Divide arugula onto four plates and top each salad with ¼ of the beets, oranges, avocados, goat cheese and pecans. Drizzle with dressing. ENJOY!

Nutrition information (4 servings): Calories: 443, Total Fat: 22g, Saturated Fat: 6.7g, Sodium: 301mg, Carbohydrates: 53g, Fiber: 13g, Protein: 14.5g

Original recipe, analyzed by verywellfit.com



MU Extension is a partnership of the University of Missouri campuses, Lincoln University, the people of Missouri through county extension councils, and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Visit our website at: <https://extension2.missouri.edu/>

##