BEETS

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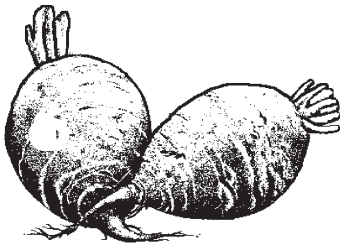


Nutrition and Health...

Red beets provide some vitamins A and C, calcium and iron, and add fiber to the diet. A ½-cup serving of plain diced beets has 25 calories.

Selection...

Select firm, round beets with a slender taproot (large main root). Select beets that are 1 to 2 inches; beets over 3 inches tend to be fibrous. Red beets should be deep red in color and smooth over most of the surface. If the beet becomes over mature, the texture becomes woody. Avoid wilted, flabby or rough beets. Don't be alarmed if the beet tops are wilted or decayed. The roots will still be satisfactory if firm.

Storage...

Trim beet tops to ½ inch to reduce wilting. Beets may be stored in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for up to two weeks. (Cut small slits in bag to increase air circulation.) Beets will last up to four months when stored in a cold (32˚F), humid root cellar or basement.

Preparation...

Using 1- to 2-inch beets, cut off all but 1 inch of beet tops. Wash beets and leave whole with root ends attached. Heat 6 cups of water, 1 tablespoon vinegar (to preserve color) and 1 teaspoon salt to boiling. Add 1½ to 2 pounds of beets. Cover, heat to boiling, then reduce heat and cook 35 to 45 minutes or until tender. Drain. Run cold water over the beets, slip skins and remove root ends. Slice, dice or leave whole, as desired. Serve buttered with salt and pepper. If you have fresh herbs, try some of these combinations. Add ½ teaspoon of the following herbs or spices per 4 servings of vegetables: fresh dill, caraway seed, bay leaf, cloves, basil, savory, mint, nutmeg, allspice, dry mustard, paprika or thyme.

Recipes

Harvard Beets

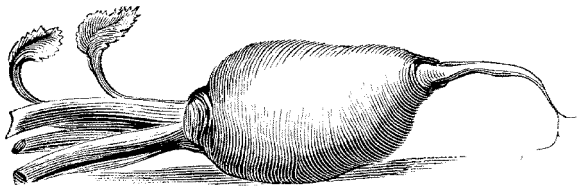
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups beet liquid (or beet liquid plus water)
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 1½ tablespoons butter or margarine
- 3 cups sliced, cooked beets

Mix cornstarch, sugar and salt. Blend in beet liquid, vinegar and butter. Cook over moderate heat, stirring constantly, until thickened. Add beets to sauce. Let stand for 10 minutes, if desired, to blend flavors. Heat to serving temperature. Makes 6 servings.

Easy Pickled Beets

- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon dry mustard
- ⅓ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- ½ cup water
- 3 cups cooked beets
- 1 medium onion, sliced, optional

Mix first four ingredients. Stir in vinegar and ½ cup water. Add beets and onion. Cover and refrigerate, stirring occasionally.



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