



BEET RECIPES

By Karen Barnaby

As soon as fall arrives, I start thinking about beets. Not only purple ones but the yellow beets that I'm happy to see are gaining in popularity. They're just as tasty and a beautiful colour.

Choose small or medium-sized beets that are smooth-skinned and deep in color. Avoid beets that have spots, bruises or soft, wet areas, all of which indicate spoilage. Shriveled or soft beets should also be avoided as these are signs that the roots are aged, tough and fibrous.

Store beets unwashed in the refrigerator crisper where they will keep for two to four weeks. Cut the majority of the greens and their stems from the roots, so they do not pull away moisture away from the root. Leave about two inches of the stem attached to prevent the roots from "bleeding." Store the unwashed greens in a separate plastic bag where they will keep fresh for about four days.

Raw beets do not freeze well since they tend to become soft upon thawing. Freezing cooked beets is fine; they'll retain their flavor and texture.

Many people boil beets but I find roasting easier and the flavour of the beets is preserved. It's economical if you already have the oven on and are cooking something else. To roast beets, place scrubbed and trimmed beets in a single layer on a double layer of tinfoil. Wrap tightly so no steam escapes. Place on a baking sheet and cook for 1 - 1¼ hours depending on the size of the beets. If the beets have been stored for a long time, it may take up to 2 hours. Let cool in the foil until cool enough to handle then slip off the skins. Use gloves if you don't want purple hands. Cooked beets are easier to peel if not chilled.

For peeling raw beets, use a small, sharp paring knife or vegetable peeler.

RECIPES

[Beet and Apple Soup](#)
[Roasted Beets with Cumin Seeds](#)

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Beet and Apple Soup

Makes 4, 8 or 16 servings

You can use yellow beets instead of purple and the soup can be pureed in a blender if you like a smooth texture.

4	8	16	servings
1/2	1	2	pounds beets, trimmed and scrubbed
4	8	16	cups vegetable or chicken broth
1	2	4	cups apple juice
1	3	6	Tbsp butter or vegetable oil
1	3	6	Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, diced
1	2	3	cup diced carrot
1	2	3	cup diced onion
1	2	3	cup diced celery
3	6	9	Tbsp fresh lemon juice, or to taste (from 1 large lemon)
			Salt and black pepper, to taste
			Sour cream for garnish, optional

Place the beets in a large, heavy pot and cover with the broth and juice. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, partially covered, until tender, about 45 minutes. Transfer the beets to a bowl with a slotted spoon, saving the broth. When cool enough to handle, slip off the skins and dice the beets.

Melt the butter in a large frying pan over medium- low heat. Add the onion, celery, carrot and apples and cook until the vegetables sizzle. Add the apple and cook, stirring frequently until the apples soften around the edges. Add to the beet broth and bring to a boil. Turn down to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes. If the soup is too thick for your taste, add a little water. Add the lemon juice and season to taste. Serve garnished with the sour cream.

Roasted Beets with Cumin Seeds

Makes 6, 12 or 18 servings

If you have access to fresh mint leaves, they're great in this beet dish. Use 1 cup of chopped leaves for every 6 servings.

6	12	18	servings	
1	2	3	Tbsp	fresh lemon juice
1	2	3	tsp	cumin seeds, toasted and lightly crushed
½	1	1 ½	tsp	salt
¼	½	1	tsp	black pepper
2	4	6	Tbsp	olive oil
3	6	9		medium beets, trimmed, leaving 1 inch of stem attached
2	4	6	Tbsp	finely chopped red onion

Stir together lemon juice, cumin seeds, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl. Stir in oil and let stand while roasting beets.

Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 400°F.

Tightly wrap beets in a double layer of foil and roast on a baking sheet until tender, 1 to 1¼ hours. Cool to warm in foil package, about 20 minutes.

When beets are cool enough to handle, peel them, discarding stems and root ends, then cut into ½-inch-wide wedges.

Toss warm beets with dressing and onion. Serve warm or cold.