



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Department of Human Services, and USDA Food & Nutrition Services Cooperating

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Simply Good Food BEETS

Canned beets are acceptable, but fresh beets are better, with a distinctive deep flavor and a crisp texture that is lost in the canning process. The distinctive flavor of beets is best as an accompaniment to simple dishes such as a roast or baked fish. They are also nice served alone as a relish, appetizer, or salad.



Marketing: Beets sold at the market should have fresh-looking leaves and at least 2 inches of stems. If you are planning to eat the greens, select those with small leaves; by the time the leaves are 6-8 inches long, they are inedible. Look for a bunch of equal-size medium beets so they will cook evenly.

Storage and Preserving: Left in the refrigerator vegetable bin, beets stay in good condition for 2-3 weeks.

Preparation: Before cooking beets, trim the stems to within 1 inch of the crowns and wash, making sure you do not scrub so vigorously you tear the skins. If beets are cooked in their skins, they bleed less. Although they will always bleed no matter how careful you are.

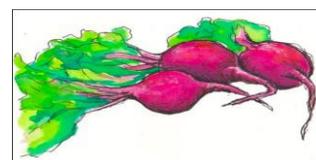
Baking beets is the best way to retain their flavor and juices, but requires the longest cooking time. Steaming is a very satisfactory method, for there is only a slight loss of flavor and the cooking time is shorter. Baking a 1 1/2 inch beet takes an hour at 300 degrees while the same beet steamed takes 40 minutes. Boiling beets is the least satisfactory method of all, because so much color and flavor is lost in the water.

Beets are done when pressure upon their skins causes the skin to move. To be sure they are tender. You can test with a sharp pointed knife or a fork but, remember some color and juice will run out. Beets are easiest to peel when they have cooled a little; just run the beets under cold water as you would with hard-boiled eggs, and their skins should slip right off with the slightest pressure. If the skins are hard to remove, the beets probably need to cook longer. An exception is freshly harvested tiny beets, which can be almost impossible to peel.

Nutritional Information: Beets are high in Vitamin A and fairly high in Phosphorus and Potassium.

Yields:
5 2-2 1/2 inches trimmed whole beets=1 lb.=2 1/2 cups cooked
Baby beets=1 inches and under
Small beets = 1-1 1/2 inches
Medium beets = 1 1/2 - 2 1/2 inches
Large beets = 2 1/2 inches and over

- Hints:**
- Grate raw beets into a salad.
 - Hard water may cause beet color to fade, but you can correct this by adding a little vinegar to the boiling water.
 - Steam or boil beets with cloves in the water. The beets will pick up a slight clove fragrance.
 - Always mix beets with other ingredients just before serving so the color does not bleed over other ingredients.



Boiled Beets

Cover trimmed and washed beets with warm water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer gently, partially covered, until tender. Count on 25-30 minutes for a 1 ½ inch beet.

Finishing Touches for Cooked Beets

1. With butter: reheat in melted butter. 2 and ½ cups beets would take approximately 2-3 tablespoons butter. Season with salt, pepper and fresh lemon juice.
2. With cream: coat 2 ½ cups beets with ¼ cup heavy cream mixed with ¼ cup sour cream and warm together without boiling. Garnish with chopped parsley or dill.
3. With vinaigrette: peel, slice and serve warm dressing to taste with Vinaigrette sauce.

RECIPES

Beets with Cream Sauce

Try this rich combination of beets and cream when you have a simple main dish such as ham or pot roast.

- 2 cups sliced cooked beets
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2/3 cup beet juices or chicken stock (or combination of both)
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- Salt and pepper
- Nutmeg

Place beets in a small buttered casserole. Melt butter in saucepan, add flour, stirring, and cook for 3 minutes without coloring. Remove from heat and beat in beet juices or stock, then cook until smooth and thick. Add cream, heat, and season with salt, pepper and a pinch of nutmeg. Pour over beets and heat in a 350 degree oven until the sauce is bubbly and beets are heated through (or gently simmer on top of the stove until beets are heated through). Serves 4

- Sprinkle beets with ½ cup grated Swiss or Parmesan cheese, or combination of both, and brown under broiler.
- Mix beets with other vegetables such as sliced cooked potatoes, carrots, turnips – or whatever you have on hand – and prepare half again as much sauce as vegetables.

- Add 2-3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill before serving.

Pickled Beets

- 4 cups cooked beets
- 1 medium onion (optional)
- 1 cup cider or wine vinegar
- 1 cup beet juice or water, or combination of both
- ¼ cup sugar

Peel and slice cooked beets: chop onion, if you like, and mix with beets. Heat vinegar, beet juice or water, and sugar just long enough to dissolve the sugar, and pour over beets. Cool at room temperature, then refrigerate for 4-6 hours before serving. They will keep a week or even longer refrigerated, but the beets will gradually soften. Makes 1 quart

One-Step Baked Beets

- 4 large or 6 medium beets
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1/3 cup stock or hot water
- 3 tablespoons butter
- Salt and pepper

Thinly slice raw peeled or small unpeeled beets and slice onion. Layer beets and onions in a small buttered casserole. Pour in hot stock or water, dot beets with butter, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for 30-60 minutes, depending upon the age of the beets. Serves 4

Source: *The Victory Garden Cookbook, Joy of Cooking.*

Source: *Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being; prepared by: Linda L. Evans, M.S., C.F.C.S., CEA-FCS, Lubbock County; and modified by Sherri Halsell, County Extension Agent, FCS, Clay County.*

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