

Extension

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Newsletter

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You Can't Beat Beets for Color, Taste, Nutrition and Fun!

Sheila Gains, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Arapahoe County

It's fun to try new foods with kids; you can't always predict their reactions. One day they will only eat a few foods, rejecting everything new. The next day they might discover something new to add to their favorites list. Have you thought about trying beets? They're full of color, flavor and nutrients. The natural antioxidants in beets and other fruits and vegetables help keep bodies working at their best. Trying new foods and/or old foods in new ways, helps expand the variety of nutrients you eat. Beets are low in sodium and calories, and fat free. They are a good source of folate and Vitamin C and are high in fiber. Wow what a package!

Choosing Fresh Beets

Choose fresh beets that have smooth skins. The leaves are edible, so make sure they are not wilted, if they are still attached.

Beet greens should be used as soon as possible or within a few days. Store beet greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Beets that have their leaves removed can be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.

Cooking Fresh Beets:

Fresh beets can be boiled, baked, roasted, microwaved or steamed. Scrub gently and rinse. Leave on 1 inch of stems and the root. Do not cut or peel beets if cooking in liquid. If cut, the beets will "bleed" red juice and nutrients into the cooking liquid. Peel and trim after cooking. Use paper towels or gloves to keep hands from staining.

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| Boil - | Simmer 20-40 minutes, or until tender. |
| Bake - | Wrap in foil, bake @ 350 F for 1 1/2- 2 hrs, or until tender. |
| Microwave- | Put 1 pound whole beets in a microwaveable dish with ¼ cup liquid. Cover and cook 10-12 min, or until tender. |

Choosing Canned Beets:

Choose canned beets with little to no sodium (salt) added. Canned beets are available in a variety of shapes such as sliced, and julienned.

Let's Talk

Because of their mild flavor and intense color, adding beets to favorite foods can be pretty easy for adventurous kids. Beets can make foods more fun and nutritious. If you don't have time to cook up a bunch of fresh beets, open a can of beets and let the kids have fun. A little beet juice in a favorite fruit smoothie recipe is like having a bottle of natural food coloring. Get children in on the discussion of the importance of eating a variety of healthy foods. Ask the kids to come up with as many ideas as possible of ways to put beets into some of their favorite dishes. Then try the top



two ideas. (Suggestions: Add ½ cup mashed beets into any cupcake, pancake or muffin recipe. Add julienned beets to a favorite salad, soup or meatloaf recipe.)

Warning: Beets and beet juice can change the color of pee and poop to an orange, pink or red color. Be sure to tell family members about this before they think something is wrong with their body. Another way eating beets adds to the fun!

Recipe for Health:

Roasted Beets and other Root Vegetables:

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

- 1 onion, quartered and layers separated
- 1 medium size white potato, peeled (optional) and diced into ½ inch cubes
- 1 medium size sweet potato, peeled and diced into ½ inch cubes
- 3-4 medium size fresh beets, peeled and diced into ½ inch cubes
- Non-stick vegetable spray
- 4 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425 F
2. Line a large baking sheet with foil and coat with non-stick vegetable spray. With an extra piece of foil, create a separate foil boat to hold the diced beets. Coat with non-stick spray and place it on top of the baking sheet.
3. Peel off dry outer onion leaves. Quarter and separate the onion layers.
4. Toss onion pieces with 1 teaspoon oil and ¼ teaspoon salt. Place on baking sheet.
5. Wash, scrub, peel, dice white and sweet potatoes.
6. Toss white and sweet potatoes with 2 teaspoons oil and ½ teaspoon salt. Place on baking sheet.
7. Wash, peel and dice beets. Caution, beet juice can stain hands, cutting board and counter.
8. Toss beets with 1 teaspoon oil and ¼ teaspoon salt. Place in foil boat on baking sheet.
9. Bake uncovered for 25 to 30 minutes or until vegetables are soft and the edges are a light brown. Enjoy!