Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Beets

Beets, available year-round, are grown in most parts of the nation, but major growing areas are California, Texas, New Jersey, Ohio, New York, and Colorado. Red beets are traditionally the most popular, but other types such as golden and white are also available. All have about the same flavor and quality. Beet season in Ohio is June to mid-October.

For information on beet varieties in Ohio, contact your county Extension educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Selection
- Select firm, round beets with a slender top root (the large main root).
- Red beets should have a deep red color and be smooth over most of the surface.
- Oversized beets may be woody.
- Size and condition of beet tops do not necessarily indicate eating quality.
- Badly wilted or decayed tops indicate lack of freshness, but the roots may be satisfactory if firm.
- Avoid elongated beets with round, scaly areas around the top surface (these will be tough, fibrous, and strong flavored).
- Avoid wilted, flabby, rough, or shriveled beets.

Storage
- Trim beet tops to one-half inch to reduce wilting.
- Store in refrigerator in plastic bags up to two weeks.
- Beets can be stored two to four months in cold, humid cellar or pit. Maintain at 32–40 degrees F and 90–95 percent relative humidity for best results.

Yield
Due to many variables, including moisture content, size and variety, it is impossible to give specific recommendations as to quantity to buy. The following recommendations are approximations.
- 1 pound = 3–4 servings
- 1 bushel (55 lb) = 18 quarts or 30–36 pints.

Nutrition
The “Dietary Guidelines for Americans” recommend that adults need 2–2½ cups of a variety of vegetables daily. Beets are a great choice to help meet this requirement. Beets contain antioxidants and anti-inflammatory substances that help prevent cancer and fight heart disease. Red beets provide some Vitamin A and C, calcium, and iron, and add fiber to the diet. A one cup serving of plain cooked diced beets has 50
calories. Red beets also add color to meals making eating more enjoyable.

**Safe Handling**

Clean surfaces, utensils, and hands after touching raw meat and poultry and before you use them on fresh produce. To remove dirt, wash beets thoroughly in cold water. Do not use soap, detergent, or bleach. Cut off all but one inch of beet tops and leave root ends attached.

**Serving**

**Preparation**

Select fresh, firm, good quality beets that are young and tender. Heat 6 cups water, 1 Tablespoon vinegar (to preserve color), and 1 teaspoon salt to boiling. Add 1½ to 2 pounds beets. Cover, heat to boiling, cook 35 to 45 minutes or until tender. Drain. Run cold water over beets, slip off skins, and remove root ends. Slice, dice, or leave whole, as desired.

**Serving**

Serve buttered with salt and pepper. Toss with orange or lemon peel. Pickle or glaze.

**Season with herbs and spices**

Add 1/2 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.

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