

Behold the Beetiful Beetroot!

Beetroot, a beautifully coloured vegetable that always manages to stain something in its path, is well worth the mess. Rich in antioxidants, iron, fibre, folate, potassium and vitamin C, this highly nutritious vegetable has countless health benefits, makes dishes look pretty and tastes amazing. It's in season now and is easy to prepare, so why not celebrate the last week of Fruit and Veg month by showcasing this vegetable on your lunch or dinner menu!



Growing

- ✦ Soak beetroot seeds in water overnight and plant in well drained, moist soil with plenty of compost.
- ✦ Beets grow really well in boxes or raised beds and need plenty of water (but don't overwater!). Feeding with seaweed based fertilisers also optimises growth to make them tastier and more tender.
- ✦ Harvest beetroot before they exceed 10cm in width or 12 weeks since planting or else they will be tough and woody.

Choosing/Storage

- ✦ Choose beets that are firm and plump with fresh green leaves. The smaller the beets are, the more tender they will be.
- ✦ Beetroot is best stored in the crisper of the fridge in an airtight bag and eaten within a week. Leaves can be removed and stored separately and eaten within 2 days.

Use

- ✦ Fresh beetroot will retain more of its nutritional content when eaten raw and minimally processed. For a vitamin and antioxidant boost, grate fresh beetroot and add to salads, wraps and burgers. Only grate as needed as some vitamins will deteriorate quickly.
- ✦ If cooking whole beetroot, trim the stem only to about 1cm as complete removal will cause a loss of colour and nutritional content.
- ✦ Beetroot is delicious roasted, juiced, pickled in vinegar, boiled and stir-fried!

Roasted Beetroot Dip

- 1 bunch beetroot
- 1 head of garlic
- 2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
- 1 cup Greek yoghurt
- 2 Tablespoons chopped mint

Heat oven to 200°C. Trim beetroot stalks to 1cm and ends of garlic. Roast beetroot and garlic on lined baking tray for about 45 minutes until tender. Cool. Wearing disposable gloves to prevent staining, gently peel beetroot, chop and add to food processor. Squeeze out garlic flesh and add to beetroot. Blend til smooth, then mix in yoghurt and herbs. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours to develop flavours. Season to taste. Garnish with extra mint and serve with a platter of colourful vegetables sticks and wholemeal pita.