



**PARKDALE  
FOOD CENTRE**  
NEIGHBOUR TO NEIGHBOUR

**YOUR  
LOCAL  
FOOD  
BANK**

# FOOD

..... OF THE .....

# MONTH BEETS

**BEETS** became popular for human consumption in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and both the roots and the leaves were eaten and enjoyed. The green leafy part of the beet root at this time was the preferred portion of the plant to consume and is both delicious and nutritious.



**HEALTH BENEFITS OF BEETS:** Beets red pigment provide powerful antioxidant protection as they contain a *unique phytonutrient betacyanin*. Beets, also rich in folate, a B vitamin, is important for a healthy heart and essential for normal tissue growth. The fiber in beets helps to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol and significantly increases HDL (beneficial) cholesterol. Beet fiber sweeps bad cholesterol from the walls and helps to eliminate it quickly from the body so it does not have a chance to build up and cause such concerns as heart attacks and strokes. Both the soluble and insoluble fiber in beets helps to remove harmful toxins from the body. Eating beets helps prevent cancer cells from invading healthy cells and protects against radiation. As well, the red colour of beets resembles that of the colour blood and is therefore, a great food to eat if you are low in iron or anemic.

The significant amount of carbohydrates in beets helps to **increase energy** as it fuels the body for day to day activities. And who doesn't want more energy!

**PREPARING BEETS:** Beets can sometimes be passed by on the grocery store shelves as they are thought to be 'messy' to handle and prepare. The first step to reduce the amount of staining from the beet is to wash them gently under cool running water, taking care not to tear the skin. Peeling your beets should be done after roasting or steaming. If the beets are smaller in size they may be tender enough that you can skip the peeling and eat them as they are. If your skin does happen to become stained from the beets, simply rub your hands together with some lemon juice.

Beets can be eaten **raw**, steamed or roasted. Raw beets can be sliced and added to salads or simple eaten on their own. Add to sandwiches and burgers for an added crunch.

The trick to cooking beets to maintain their valued nutrients is not to overcook them. Steaming for just fifteen minutes is one of the healthiest and easiest way to maximize nutrients and flavour.



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## BEETS



### ROASTED

- 1** Wash and trim off the roots, top and bottom of the beet
- 2** Cut beet into quarters
- 3** Place in 400 degree oven or toaster oven for 45 minutes to 1 hour
- 4** Beets are cooked when fork tender
- 5** Rub with paper towel to remove the skin

### SLOW COOKER METHOD

- 1** Combine beets (and other root vegetables if you choose), garlic, olive oil, salt and pepper in slow cooker
- 2** Stir to combine
- 3** Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or high for 3 hours.
- 4** Beets are done when tender and not mushy and falling apart.

### STEAMED

- 1** Trim the bottom and top of the beet root and cut the beet into equal size pieces (1-2 Beets per person per serving)
- 2** Fill the bottom of a steamer or small saucepan with 2 inches of water
- 3** When the water has come to a boil, add beets and steam covered for 15 minutes.
- 4** Beets are cooked when a fork is easily inserted into the beet.
- 5** Peel beets by rubbing skin off with a paper towel or napkin.
- 6** Transfer to a bowl. You can add salt and pepper or any other favourite seasoning of choice.
- 7** Add a drizzle of olive oil. Carotenoids, healthy compounds in beets, are best absorbed when consumed with olive oil.

## SIMPLE BORSCHT SOUP

Serves 4-6



### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ½ tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup beetroot, peeled and chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1-2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4 cups beef or veggie stock
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ lemon, juiced

### DIRECTIONS:

- 1** Add olive oil in a large pan over a gentle heat. Add beets, onions, carrots and garlic, combining with the olive oil.
- 2** Add the stock to the pan, season with a few sprinkles of pepper and bring the soup to a simmer.
- 3** Cook for about 40 minutes until the vegetables are fork tender.
- 4** **Option One:** using a blender, blend the soup until it is entirely smooth, then add the lemon juice and salt to taste. **Option two:** Enjoy the soup as is, in its "chunky" form, adding lemon juice and salt to taste.