

LEARN



Chioggia Beets

facts

- Spanish translation: *El betabel, La remolacha*
- Hmong translation: *Zaub ntug hauv paus*
- Most of the beets grown in Wisconsin are red, but there are also pink, purple, white, and yellow beets, and even ones with candy cane stripes!
- Beets are related to Swiss Chard and both the beet root and leaves can be eaten.
- Red beets get their bright red color from pigments called betalains, also known for their cancer-fighting properties.
- Beet juice is a basic ingredient of Russian borscht. Beet juice can also be used as a natural dye! The Victorians dyed their hair with beet juice in 19th century England.
- Beets are native to the shores of North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Beets were first grown by the ancient Romans.

Golden Beets



EAT



nutrition & seasonality

• Key nutrients:

- Vitamin C** - Helps wounds heal, is important for the immune system, and is an antioxidant, which protects our cells from damage.
- Folate** - Helps prevent birth defects, is needed to make DNA, and helps your cells divide, including red blood cells.
- Potassium** - Helps maintain normal blood pressure.

- Fresh beets grown in Wisconsin are available from June through October.

TASTE



Nutritious,
Delicious,
Wisconsin!

taste testing

Purchase fresh beets and canned beets from the grocery store. Cook the fresh beets by boiling and then peeling them, or place beets with about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water in a microwave-safe dish and cover with a lid or plastic wrap. Microwave on high until tender (about 10-12 minutes). Let kids try one slice of fresh beet and one slice of canned beet. Encourage kids to use their five senses to observe, smell, feel, listen, and taste the beets. How are they the same or different?

To sweeten the fresh and canned beets prior to tasting, marinate them overnight in orange juice or orange juice concentrate (depending on how sweet you want the taste testing).

— Credit Julie Yezek, FoodWise Nutrition Educator



FUN



Red Beets

activity: *Grow Your Own Beet Greens*

Objective: Kids will learn how to grow beet greens from cuttings.

Supplies: Beets, shallow plate, water, and a chef's knife (for adults!).

Procedure:

1. Buy a bunch of beets with the tops still attached.
2. Trim the greens off (and save them for eating! You can wash the beet greens, chop, and saute them in olive oil - yum!).
3. Cut off the top of the beets with at least ½ inch of beetroot still attached.
4. Set the beet tops cut-side down in a dish of water and leave in a sunny spot in your classroom. Change the water every other day.
5. Use the leftover beetroot for taste testing.
6. Ask kids to make daily observations as the beets begin to grow more leaves. Discuss what plants need to grow. Answer: *sunlight, water, and air (carbon dioxide)*. Once the leaves are big enough, cut a few to taste!

— Credit: Nicole Leipski, FoodWise Teaching Coordinator

This activity can be done in multiple settings: classroom, outdoors, garden, or virtual.

Tips for adapting to virtual learning: An educator can grow beet greens and share the process with kids over a virtual learning platform. You can also share a link to a video: <https://youtu.be/5VJbkjBU3jY>.

Share pictures and engage with the Wisconsin Harvest of the Month community by using #WIHarvestoftheMonth on social media.

READ



books

- *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens
- *The Big Beet* by Lynn Ward
- *Squash Boom Beet: An Alphabet for Healthy, Adventurous Eaters* by Lisa Maxbauer Price
- *Beets: Fun Facts on Fruits & Vegetables* by Michelle Hawkins
- *The Farmer & the Beet* by Jeremy David



planting

Beets are tolerant to frost and can be planted in the spring, four weeks before the last frost. Plant seeds about ½ inch deep and one inch apart. Space rows 12-18 inches apart. Once the seedlings sprout, thin to 3 inches between seedlings. Beet seeds prefer cool and moist conditions, so remember to water your seeds regularly.

harvesting

Harvest beets when they are between 1-3 inches in diameter. Beets larger than 3 inches may be tough and fibrous. Remove greens before storing beets in the refrigerator. Remember, you can eat the beet greens too!