



Beets

The beet (*Beta vulgaris*) is a hardy biennial in the amaranth family that is treated as an annual. The history of beet cultivation stretches back about 4,000 years. The plant was probably domesticated somewhere along the Mediterranean. Beets contain numerous vitamins and nutrients, offer a wide range of flavors and textures, can be enjoyed raw or cooked, and are wonderfully easy to grow!

There are several factors to consider when choosing which beet to grow. Since beets come in a variety of interesting shapes and beautiful colors, pick whatever appeals to your eye! Cylindrically shaped beets, such as 'Cylindra' and 'Formanova,' yield many uniform slices per root. Smaller beets are usually the best for canning and pickling.

Beet seed is actually a fruit or seed ball with several embryos. Unless you buy seed designated as monogerm seed -- one embryo per fruit -- you will need to thin the planting when plants are 2 inches in height. Thinnings can be used in salads. Final spacing should be 3 inches in all directions. The final thinning can be delayed until small beets are large enough for table use.

Planting:

Direct sowing is preferable to transplanting because there is less root disturbance. Before sowing, cultivate soil deeply. Seed germinates at 45°F. to 85°F. Plant in loose, rich, well-drained soil in wide rows or beds with full sun. Space seeds 2 inches apart in all directions, and cover

with ½-inch of fine soil or 1-inch of sandy soil. Plant successively at 3-week intervals for crops throughout the season. Expect germination in 10 to 15 days and harvests within 50 to 60 days.

Cultivation:

- **Fertilizing** - Apply a pre-plant fertilizer before seeding this heavy feeder. Boron, a micronutrient, may be deficient in sandy soils and cause development of black spots in the roots. In areas with boron deficiency, apply 6 to 7 level tablespoons of borax/1000 sq. ft. of garden area.
- **Watering** - Keep plants uniformly supplied with moisture for best performance. Water deeply and regularly during dry periods.
- **Weeding** - Remove all young weed seedlings by hand and use a mulch laid along each side of the row to keep weed seeds from germinating. Frequent shallow cultivation is important because beets compete poorly with weeds, especially when small. Deep cultivation after the weeds are large damages beet roots. Remember to thin your beets and use the thinnings in salads.
- **Special directions** - Soaking seed in warm water for 24 hours before planting will aid germination which, in turn, may help prevent soil rot and seed maggot problems in cool, spring soil.

Harvesting:

Pull beet roots when they are 1 to 3 inches in diameter. Approximate yield per 10 foot row is 2 to 5 pounds, depending on size.

Storage and Preservation:

Beets store best in a very cold (32°F), moist (95% Relative Humidity) environment. In refrigerator, store in a vented plastic bag.

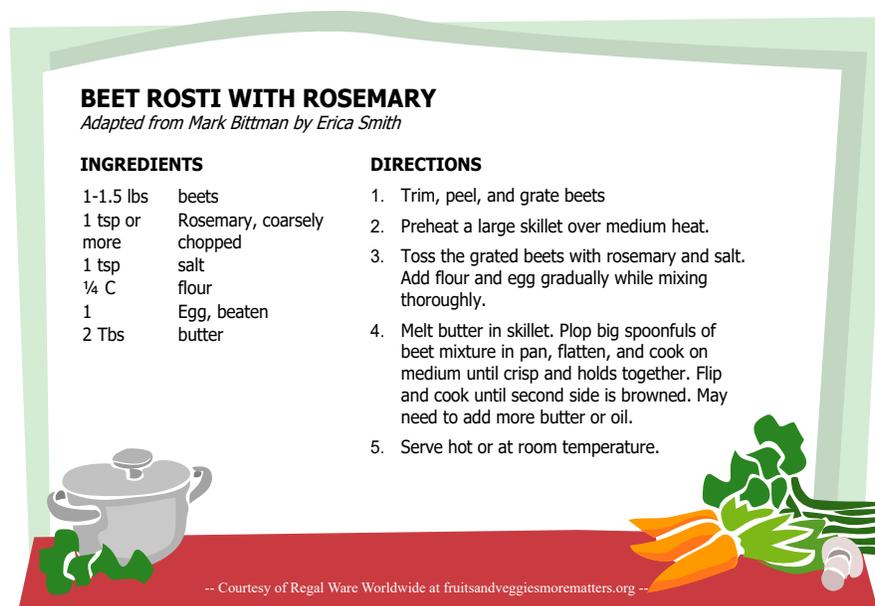
Nutrition:

Beets contain small amounts of several vitamins and minerals. Beet greens are a good source of calcium and Vitamin A.

Preparation & Use:

Cook from fresh or pickle.

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BEET ROSTI WITH ROSEMARY
Adapted from Mark Bittman by Erica Smith

INGREDIENTS		DIRECTIONS
1-1.5 lbs	beets	1. Trim, peel, and grate beets
1 tsp or more	Rosemary, coarsely chopped	2. Preheat a large skillet over medium heat.
1 tsp	salt	3. Toss the grated beets with rosemary and salt. Add flour and egg gradually while mixing thoroughly.
¼ C	flour	4. Melt butter in skillet. Plop big spoonfuls of beet mixture in pan, flatten, and cook on medium until crisp and holds together. Flip and cook until second side is browned. May need to add more butter or oil.
1	Egg, beaten	5. Serve hot or at room temperature.
2 Tbs	butter	

-- Courtesy of Regal Ware Worldwide at fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org --

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