



How sweet they are: A tale of two beets

Are sugar beets the same thing as the beets that are pickled or canned?

Not quite. They're from the same family, of course, but the sugar beet is distinctly different from the table beet.

Sugar beets are larger than table beets. They're about a foot long and grow to anywhere from 2 to 5 pounds apiece. They're white instead of the traditional deep red of the table beet, and have been described as looking a bit like a fat parsnip.

Thanks to careful selection and breeding, they have a much higher sugar content than table beets — they're nearly 20 percent sugar compared to a 2 to 4 percent sugar content in table beets.

Sugar beets produce table sugar, or sucrose — the same type of sugar that comes from sugar cane. In fact, both beet sugar and cane sugar are 99.95 percent sucrose. About 30 percent of the world's sugar comes from sugar beets, but, according to the American Sugar Beet Growers Association, sugar beets make up over half of the sugar produced in the United States.

Table beets, or garden beets, are much smaller than sugar beets. They are usually harvested when the root is about 1.5 to 2 inches in diameter; if they get larger than 3 inches, the tender root can easily become tough and fibrous.

Beets are a good source of vitamin C, folate, iron and manganese. Plus,

one cup of diced beets has a respectable 3 grams of fiber. Although beets are among the sweetest of vegetables, they have only 50 calories per cup. In addition, their deep color, stemming from the pigment betacyanin, indicates that beets offer a good supply of phytonutrients. Nutritionists recommend eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables that embody a rainbow of colors to get the broadest scope of nutrients possible.

Beet greens are also nutritious, and can be eaten raw or cooked. A cup of raw beet greens has only 8 calories but offers nearly half of the vitamin A you need in a day, plus good amounts of fiber; vitamins C, E, K, and B6; and thiamin, riboflavin, calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, copper and manganese. A cup of boiled and drained beet greens has just 40 calories and offers more than double the vitamin A you need in a day, as well as good amounts of the other nutrients.

When buying fresh beets with the greens still attached, trim the greens before storing; they can deplete moisture from the root part of the vegetable, drying it out more quickly.

Table beets are grown in Ohio. Look for locally grown beets in the produce section at your grocery store or farmers' market, or consider planting your own.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For the week of
Sept. 2, 2007

By Martha Filipic
(614) 292-9833
filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Matt Kleinhenz, associate professor of horticulture and crop science for Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center.

To receive Chow Line by e-mail, send a message to filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu or sign up at <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/subscribe.php>.

Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

OSU Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status.