



BEETS

What is It?

- Beets are considered root vegetables because the part of the plant most commonly eaten grows underground; however, the leafy green plant tops are edible too.
- The Romans were some of the first people to grow beets. They ate beetroots and also used them to feed animals.
- The Greeks were the first people to consume both the roots and leaves.
- Beets come in various colors like red, purple, orange, and yellow, and one variety, the Chioggia beet, can even be striped like a candy cane.
- Beet juice has been used as a natural red dye since the 16th century.
- Beets are one of the sweetest vegetables. One variety, called a Sugar Beet, is used to make sugar.
- The heaviest beet on record weighed 52 lb. 14 oz!



Beets, credit: WSDA

Grow It

Beets are hardy vegetables and can be planted directly in the soil, about 1/2-1 inch deep, four weeks before the last frost. Beets do well when planted with onions, cooking greens, radishes, turnips, and garlic. If possible, plant beets where bush beans or peas previously grew because the soil is rich in nitrogen that beets need to grow.





Make It

Be sure to follow local Food Safety rules and regulations. Learn more here: [Food Safety Rules and Regulations | Washington State Department of Health](#).

Recipe: Galina's Very Berry Beet Smoothies
Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients	Directions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 cups blueberries• 3 carrots• 6 apples, cored and cut into chunks• 3 peeled beets, cut into chunks• 9 kale leaves	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Wash and prepare all ingredients.2. Add all ingredients to blender. For a very thick shake, do not add water. Add water to thin or if not using a high-speed blender.3. Blend 45 seconds.

Recipe adapted from: VitaMix.

Explore interactive taste test resources to encourage participants to try what you made!
[Taste-Testing Event Resources](#)



Golden Beets, credit: WSDA



Colorful Beets, Inside and Out

Learn It

Preschool

Objectives

- Children will explore a variety of beets using their senses. Children will make predictions and compare beet color, texture, and taste.

Materials

- Beets of assorted colors, such as red, golden, and pink.
- Striped Chioggia beets, which can be found at many farmers markets in May–September, make a fun addition.
- If only one variety is available, use that and show photos of other beet varieties from seed catalogs or online.
- Cook half of the beets and let cool. Leave others raw.
- Plastic coverings for tables.
- Aprons or plastic garbage bags with holes cut out for head and arms.
- Various cooking tools (use what you have) for exploring the beets. Scissors or plastic knives for cutting leaves, graters (children need adult assistance and a demonstration of safe grating so they do not grate their fingers), toothpicks for poking or picking up beet pieces, etc.
- Lemons to help clean beet stains from hands
- Plastic knives for children
- Paper for beet stamping
- Chart paper

Directions

1. Tell children today we will be exploring beets, and children will have the chance to explore how this root feels, tastes, and smells.

2. Ask children to put on aprons and explain that beet juice will stain clothing, so it is important to explore the beets on the table.

3. Remind the children that vegetables grow above the ground and below the ground, and ask children: Do beet roots grow above the ground or below the ground? (Answer: the roots grow below the ground.)

4. Talk about places you can find beets (on a farm, in a farmers market, at a supermarket).





Colorful Beets, Inside and Out

Learn It

Directions

5. Show children the different colors of beets. Ask children to guess what color the inside of the beet will be and cut it open to reveal the color (this will be especially fun with the Chioggia beets). Record children's predictions on chart paper or whiteboard.
6. Let children explore beets with cooking tools available.
7. Talk with children about what they are seeing, smelling, and feeling. What words describe the feel of beets (hard, rough, smooth, slippery)? What does a beet smell like (sweet, salty)? How do cooked beets look, smell, and feel differently than raw beets? Do the different colors smell or feel differently? Take a "Tried it, Liked it, Loved it" vote and record and chart results.
8. Help children wash hands, using lemon juice if needed. Explain that lemon can help remove the beet stains on their fingers.

Lesson adapted from: Harvest for Healthy Kids.





Eat It

- Beet roots are a good source of vitamin C, which supports healthy skin, gums, and immune system. They also provide B vitamins like riboflavin (vitamin B2) and folate (Vitamin B9), which play an important role in the growth and maintenance of cells.
- Beet greens, like other leafy green vegetables, are very dense in nutrients. They contain a variety of vitamins which help to support the immune system and protect against disease. The calcium and iron in beet greens help build strong bones and muscles.

Read It

- Tops and Bottoms, by Janet Stevens
- City Beet, written by Tziporah Cohen and illustrated by Udayana Lugo
- Oliver's Vegetables, by Vivian French

More About It

- Lessons from Washington Agriculture in the Classroom:
 - K-2nd grade: [Plant Tops and Bottoms](#)
 - K-2nd Grade: [Dig 'Em Up](#)
- Lessons from Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project:
 - K-2nd grade: [Exploration of Plant Parts](#)
 - 3-5th Grade: [Eating in Season](#)
- This 10-minute video segment shows the sugar beet from the farm to the fork [America's Heartland | 322 | Season 3 | PBS](#) (starting at 11:35)

This resource was adapted for Washington state from Montana Harvest of the Month Classroom Bites: Beets. [HOM ECE Classroom Bites Beets](#)



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Washington Harvest of the Season: **Beets**