

MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

July 2017

Eating Local and Seasonal: Beets

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The summer months are the peak season for fresh Ontario bunched red beets. Look for beets with the tops or beet greens left on, which is usually is not available on beets purchased in the winter. Both the beet root and beet greens are packed with nutrition. Read all about the nutritional value of this vegetable in this issue and try the recipe (on the back) to use up all parts of the beet in your summer recipes.

Nutritional Goodness

Of all the studied health effects of eating beets, its effect on blood pressure seems the most promising. Some studies have shown that drinking beetroot juice may help with lowering blood pressure, thanks to something called nitrates. Unfortunately, most studies have only tested this for a short duration, so more studies will need to be done to see if this effect can be long-lasting. On the other hand, a diet high in vegetables and fruit is known to be effective at lowering blood pressure, so it may not hurt to throw in some beets here and there amongst your other vegetables varieties.



Are Nitrates Good or Bad?

Nitrates are present in the soil of which plants grow in, and so are typically found in higher levels in root and leafy green vegetables. Our body converts nitrates to nitrites, and finally nitric oxide, which has been suggested to be linked blood pressure lowering.

On the other hand, nitrates and nitrites can also be added into our foods. It is most well-known in its use in the curing process of meats, for preservation against bacteria and colour change. Research shows that a diet high in processed meats is linked to cancer, although research is still ongoing on whether this is related to the added nitrates and nitrites that is present.

The bottom line: Avoid processed meats as much as possible and enjoy a diet rich in vegetables and fruits for maximum health benefits.

Beet root also contains plant compounds called betalains which gives beets its famous bright red colour. Betalains are not only for show, because they have been reported to carry antioxidant and anti-inflammatory functions in animal studies. In other words, beets have potential to influence the development of various chronic diseases at the cellular level.

Beet roots are also a good source of fibre, folate, manganese, potassium and vitamin C.

Beet greens, the leafy component of the beet vegetable also has its own advantages. Similar to beet root, it is a good source of fibre, manganese and potassium. In addition, beet greens carry large amounts of vitamins A and K, as well as some B vitamins, iron, and magnesium.

You may have heard that beet greens also contain calcium. However, a compound in these leafy greens called oxalates (or oxalic acid) inhibits the absorption of the calcium that is present and so beet greens are not considered to be a good source of this mineral.

For individuals who have calcium oxalate kidney stones, precaution may also need to be taken so that beets are not consumed excessively because of their high oxalate levels. Speak with your Nurse Practitioner or Registered Dietitian for more information.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

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Beet Greens Pesto Pasta served with Raw Beet Salad in Citrus Dressing



Ingredients for Pesto (Makes 1/3 cup pesto):

1 cup	Basil
1/2 cup	Beet greens
2 tbsp.	Pine nuts
1/2 to 1 clove	Garlic
1/3 cup	Parmesan cheese, grated
3 tbsp.	Extra virgin olive oil

Ingredients for Beet Salad (Makes 2 cups):

3	Small beets (2" diameter), peeled
1/2	Orange, zested and juiced
1/2	Lemon, zested and juiced
2 tbsp.	White balsamic vinegar
1/2 tsp	Mustard
1/2 tbsp.	Honey
1 tbsp.	Olive oil
1/16 tsp	Salt
	Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions:

Beet Salad

1. Using a cheese grater, shred beets and set aside.
2. In a medium-sized bowl, whisk together orange zest and juice, lemon zest and juice, vinegar, mustard, honey, oil, salt and pepper.
3. Add to beets and toss until evenly coated.
4. Serve right away or after marinating in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Recipe from <http://loveandcilantro.com/orange-beet-salad/>

Nutrition information (Per cup):

160 calories, Fat 7 g (9% DV), Carbohydrate 24 g (9% DV), Fibre 4 g (14%), Protein 2 g, Sodium 200 mg (9% DV), Sugars 18 g (includes 4 g added sugars), Calcium 2%, Iron 6%, Potassium 10%

Pesto

1. Add basil, beet greens, pine nuts, garlic, and cheese into food processor.
2. Using the pulse function, gradually blend the ingredients together while adding the olive oil.
3. Serve with pasta.

Recipe adapted from <http://damndelicious.net/2014/07/05/easy-homemade-pesto/>

Nutrition information (Per cup of whole wheat pasta with 2 tbsp. pesto):

376 calories, Fat 23 g (37% DV), Carbohydrate 35 g (12% DV), Fibre 5 g (20%), Protein 10 g, Sodium 185 mg (8% DV), Sugars 1 g, Calcium 12%, Iron 21%, Potassium 6%