

Beets

By Jayme Green, Nimkee Fitness Coordinator

When is the last time you tasted a juicy beet? Beets are not a common vegetable but they pack a good amount of nutritional value. With the help of Nancy Clark, a RD and the book “The Market Basket” by the MSU Extension, I have put together a Beet Guide. After reading, go enjoy a beet today!

How to choose the best beet.

Pick the firm, smooth beets with a deep red color, and if available, fresh looking tops. Choose beets that are the same size. One pound of beets makes 3-4 servings.

How do you store beets?

In the refrigerator and are best if used within 2 weeks.

How to use beets?

Wash beets well. Beet greens should be removed (you may cook them separately) but leave an inch or 2 of stem. Do not peel beets until after they are cooked. Cook, covered in boiling water till tender, about 35-55 minutes. Cool slightly and rub off skins.

How messy?

They can be very messy, that is why it is wise to cook them with skin on.

How nutritious are they for you?

Beets are packed with

Vitamin C: Benefits of Vitamin C may include protection against immune system deficiencies, cardiovascular disease, prenatal health problems, eye disease, and even skin wrinkling.

Folate: Benefits of folate include fetal development, production of red blood cells, brain function and helps in depression.

Potassium: Helps your heart beat. Potassium helps trigger your heart squeeze blood throughout your body.

Magnesium: Helps keep blood pressure normal, bones strong, and the heart rhythm steady.

Iron: (Iron is found in the leafy part of the beet) Iron is involved in reactions within the body that produce energy. It helps the red blood cells carry oxygen from lungs to tissues.

If I haven't convinced you enough to eat beets, here's an excerpt from the [The Athlete's Kitchen](#) by Nancy Clark:

“Beets, as well as rhubarb and arugula, are rich sources of dietary nitrates, a compound that gets converted into nitric oxide (NO). Nitric oxide dilates blood vessels, lowers blood pressure, and allows a person to exercise using less oxygen. In a study, cyclists consumed pre-ride beets and then three hours later (when NO peaks), they rode in a time trial. Every cyclist improved (on average, 2.8%) as compared to the time trial with no beets. Impressive! The amount of nitrates in 7 ounces (200 grams) beets is an effective dose. How about enjoying beets—or a bowl of borchst—in your next pre-game meal?”