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BALSAMIC BEET SALAD with Fresh Herbs, Toasted Walnuts & Feta Cheese

Naturally Delicious Recipes • Janice Feuer-Haugen

Until last summer, roasting was my preferred way to cook beets. (Actually, the only way I cooked beets.) I'd not heard of nor considered steaming beets. Though, steam them I did. To my surprise, the wedges of steamed beet were tender and retained both their flavor and color. While hot, I tossed them in a balsamic vinegar, fresh herb and garlic dressing. By adding some favorite beet accompaniments—roasted walnuts, fresh mint and feta cheese—a new, healthy, delicious, and gorgeous Balsamic Beet Salad was born. Plus, I can now recommend two excellent cooking methods for beets: roasting and steaming.

Steaming Beets Is a Win-Win

Steaming beets retains both their vitamins and minerals as well as their gorgeous color and flavor. Plus, they cook in about a third to half the time of roasted beets. Depending on their size, in 30–45 minutes, steamed beets are tender and ready to eat. Great as an easy side dish with just a sprinkling of salt. And, especially delicious as a side or main dish *Balsamic Beet Salad*.

Golden Beets vs. Red Beets

In Montana, our beet season lasts from late June through October. During the early season months, it's easy to find just-harvested small to medium-size beets with their greens still attached. Throughout the summer, local farmers' markets have beautiful displays of red, golden and even heirloom pink striped Chioggia (*Kee-OH-gee-uh*) beets.



Mild and sweet golden beets and Chioggia beets have a less earthy flavor than red beets. Nutritionally, though, they are all quite similar to one another. Culinarily 😊 red beets turn everything they contact a beautiful shade of red-violet. Golden beets also bleed, though it is only noticeable when combined with Chioggia beets. And then you can barely tell the two apart.

To Peel or Not To Peel...

That is the question. Some people say absolutely peel beets and can't imagine ever *not* peeling them.

Here are my more flexible guidelines:

- With young and tender beets, a good scrub and some trimming around the ends with a peeler or a knife, and they're good to go.
- Peel especially dirty beets that have a lot of grit in their attached roots.
- Older, larger beets with tough skins benefit from peeling.
- If you do decide to peel beets, it is much easier to do so after cooking than before.



Recipe on next page...

Balsamic Beet Salad with Golden and/or Red Beets Tossed in Balsamic Herb & Garlic Dressing

This gorgeous **Balsamic Beet Salad** is a satisfying contrast of flavors and textures: fresh mint adds brightness, walnuts add crunch and feta cheese adds creaminess. Plus, adding the hot and tender beets to the dressing lets the beets absorb more of the dressing's sweet, tart and tangy flavor. Easily doubled, tripled or more depending upon your love of beets. ■

Makes 4+ servings
Total time: About 1 hour

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ pounds golden or red beets, preferably small to medium-sized

BALSAMIC HERB & GARLIC DRESSING

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons pomegranate molasses (see note)
- 1 medium-large clove of garlic crushed in a garlic press
- ¼ teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
- ¾ teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt or Himalayan salt
- 8 twists freshly ground pepper

BEET SALAD

- ½ cup walnut halves and pieces
- 2 ounces cubed feta or crumbled goat cheese
- 2 tablespoons thinly-sliced fresh mint leaves
- 3 cups arugula or a mix of salad greens

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Clean and trim the beets. Halve them, then depending on their size, cut each half in half, in thirds or in fourths.
- 2) Place the beet wedges in a steamer basket in a pot over boiling water. Cover the pot.
- 3) While the beets are steaming, whisk the dressing ingredients together in a medium mixing bowl.



Golden Beets
Trimmed & Cleaned



Cut Red Beet
Halves



Garden Mint
Just Picked



Chioggia & Golden Beets
for Steaming

4) Steam small to medium beets 30+ minutes. Steam medium to large beets 35-40+ minutes. Use a fork to test. When easily pierced with a fork, transfer them to the bowl with the dressing. Use a rubber spatula to gently toss the beets in the dressing.

5) Continue steaming the remaining beets, checking every 5 minutes until they are all tender and tossed in the dressing.

6) While the beets are steaming, prepare the salad accompaniments.

7) Bake the walnuts in a 300-degree oven for 10–12 minutes until toasted. Put aside to cool.

8) Wash and dry the salad greens. Store them in the refrigerator until needed.

9) Dice the feta or crumble the goat cheese.

10) Thinly slice the fresh mint. Keep it refrigerated until needed.

11) As the beets cool to room temperature, give them an occasional toss.

12) Assemble the Salad. Just before serving, toss the beets with ¾ of the toasted walnuts, feta or goat cheese and thinly-sliced mint. Reserve ¼ of each for garnishing the salad.

13) Tear or cut the greens and spread them out on a platter. Top the greens with all the beets and dressing. Garnish with the reserved walnuts, cheese and mint.

Note: Tart, sweet, and tangy **Pomegranate Molasses** adds a burst of bright flavor to **Balsamic Beet Salad**, providing the perfect counterpoint to the beet's earthiness and making all the flavors pop. Lebanese Al Wadi makes the brand I prefer. Their natural pomegranate molasses is made from 100% pomegranate juice with no added sugar.

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