

Eat Beetroot!

Many people are averse to beetroot having only experienced crinkle-cut slices steeped in overpowering vinegar. This is a shame because fresh beetroot has much to commend it in terms of flavour (sweet, slightly earthy), texture (smooth and velvety) and colour (dark red/purple, or an appealingly lurid pink when combined with cream or yoghurt).

These attributes make it a key ingredient in many fabulous salads. And if you haven't tried fresh beetroot juice you may be pleasantly surprised at how subtle it is, particularly when offset with a sharper ingredient such as orange or apple.

HISTORY - Beetroot evolved from wild seabet which is a native of coastlines from India to Britain. Two thousand years ago, prior to being modified by cultivation techniques, beetroot had a carrot-shaped root and only the leaves were eaten (the small root was used for medicinal purposes by ancient Greeks and Romans). The familiar rounded root variety was developed around the sixteenth century and gained widespread popularity in Europe a couple of hundred years later.

Today beetroot is common throughout much of Europe, and is used extensively in Scandinavian, Eastern European and Russian cuisine.

BIOLOGY - The beetroot plant, *Beta vulgaris*, has deep tap roots and can grow in a variety of soil conditions. Other members of the genus include chard, sugar beet, spinach and samphire. The red variety is dominant but golden and white beetroot is grown on a smaller scale.

NUTRITION - The verdict from a Nutritional Therapist Another root which is high in betacarotene and folic acid. Excellent for those wanting to stay healthy as eating it regularly helps cleanse the liver and can assist in lowering incidences of heart disease.

BUYING - Beetroot should be firm with a smooth, undamaged surface. Smaller roots are more tender - avoid any larger than about 6cm in diameter as they may have tough, woody cores.

COOKING - Scan the code below to view the recipe for '*Beetroot & Lentil Burgers*' on the seasonal recipes blog.



or visit: qmul sustainability.wordpress.com/recipes