

Beetroot

A Powerful Internal Cleanser

By Dr Karin Elgar, Nutritional Therapist

Beetroot has long been valued for its purifying properties. Beetroot contains betacyanin which gives it its characteristic deep red colour. Betacyanin is a powerful antioxidant and cancer-fighting agent. In animal studies betacyanin has been shown to boost the activity of two important antioxidant enzyme systems in the liver, the body's primary organ of detoxification.



Beets also are a rich source of betaine which can help reduce inflammation and decrease elevated homocysteine levels, making it a useful vegetable in the prevention of many chronic health conditions from Alzheimers to depression and diabetes to heart disease.

Beetroot is one of the richest sources of folate, which is important for a healthy heart and for women trying to conceive, as it helps prevent spinal chord defects in the baby. Beetroot is also a source of fibre, potassium, manganese, iron, vitamin C, and a number of other vitamins and minerals.



When buying beetroot go for small to medium sized roots which are firm and have a smooth undamaged skin. They are best stored unwashed in the vegetable compartment of the fridge with the leaves trimmed a couple of centimetres above the root. The greens are also very nutritious and can be used like spinach.

To retain the nutrients use the beetroot raw or boil unpeeled. Grated raw beetroot makes a delicious addition to salads or soups. Or add some beetroot chunks when roasting other root vegetables. See below for more ideas.

And a final note: you may notice a red colouration of your urine and stools after eating beetroot. This is harmless and nothing to worry about.

Recipes

Raw beetroot and carrot salad

Beetroot and carrots team up very nicely both in taste and in their cleansing properties. Apples contain pectin which helps eliminate toxins from the bowel. And all three, beetroot, carrots and apples, are excellent sources of anti-oxidants.

Serves 2-3

1 medium sized beetroot
1 medium carrot
1 apple
Juice of 1 lemon
1-2 tbsp single cream, yoghurt or soya cream
2 tbsp sunflower seeds

Finely grate the beetroot, carrot and apple into a bowl. Immediately mix with the lemon juice and cream, and sprinkle with the sunflower seeds.

Detox Juice

Another great beetroot, carrot, apple combination. The ginger gives it a nice "kick".

Makes 1 large or 2 small glasses

1 medium beetroot (approx. 150g)
3 medium carrots (approx. 300g)
1 apple (approx. 200g)
Approx. 1cm ginger

Borscht

The traditional Russian beetroot soup with a deep red colour.

Serves 4

1 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 leek, finely chopped
1 stick celery, finely chopped
2 medium beetroots, peeled and finely chopped
1 large carrot, grated
1 litre vegetable stock
2 tbsp lemon juice
Black pepper to taste
2 tbsp soured cream

Gently fry the onion, leek and celery in the olive oil until soft. Add the stock, beetroot, carrot, lemon juice and black pepper, bring to the boil and simmer for approximately 40 minutes until all vegetables are very soft.

Traditionally the soup is then strained into a clean pot through a sieve lined with a muslin. If you prefer a thicker consistency liquidise the soup using a blender. Reheat and adjust seasoning.

Serve with a dollop of soured cream.