



Using, Storing and Preserving Beets



Prepared by:
Linda Huyck, MSU Extension educator

Michigan-grown beets are available late July to late October.

Recommended varieties

Big Red, Crosby's Egyptian, Detroit Dark Red, Early Wonder, Gladiator, Honey Red, Little Ball, Little Mini Ball, Pacemaker, Red Ace, Ruby Queen, Sangria and Warrior are all excellent varieties for canning.

Storage and food safety

- Avoid using large beets greater than 3 inches in diameter.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Do not trim the root.
- Wash beets thoroughly under cool running water. Do not use soap.
- Keep beets away from raw meats and meat juice to prevent cross contamination.
- Before storing, trim the stem to 2 inches above the beet. Do not trim the tail.
- Store beets in a plastic bag in the refrigerator at or below 41 °F for 7 to 10 days.
- Beets may be frozen for up to ten months.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

2 1/2 to 3 pounds fresh beets (without tops)	=	2 pints frozen beets
13 1/2 pounds of fresh beets (without tops)	=	9 pints of canned beets
10 medium beets (without tops)	=	about 1 pound or 2 cups of cooked beets



How to preserve

Freezing

Select deep, uniformly red, tender, young beets, no more than 3 inches across. Wash and sort according to size. Trim tops, leaving 1/2 inch of stem and tap root to prevent bleeding of color during cooking. Cook in boiling water until tender. For small beets, cook 25 to 30 minutes; for medium beets, cook 45 to 50 minutes. Cool promptly in cold water. Peel, remove stem and tap root, and cut into slices or cubes. Package, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Canning

Pressure canning is the only safe method for canning beets. For the best quality, use beets that are 1-2 inches in diameter. Trim off beet tops, leaving an inch of stem and roots to reduce bleeding of color during cooking. Scrub well. Cover with boiling water. Boil until skins slip off easily (about 15 to 25 minutes, depending on size of beets). Cool. Remove skins and trim off stems and roots. Leave baby beets whole, and cut medium or large beets into 1/2-inch cubes or slices. Half or quarter very large slices. If desired, add 1 teaspoon of salt per quart to each jar. Fill hot jars with hot beets and fresh hot water, leaving 1-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process in a weighted-gauge canner at 10 pounds pressure or in a dial-gauge canner at 11 pounds pressure: pints for 30 minutes and quarts for 35 minutes. Let jars stand undisturbed for 24 hours. Remove rings. Wash, label, date and store jars.

NOTE: The processing times given above are for altitudes of 0-1,000 feet. If you are canning at a higher altitude, the processing times stay the same, but you must make the following adjustments when using a dial-gauge canner:

- At altitudes of 1,001-2,000 feet, process at 11 pounds pressure.
- At altitudes of 2,001-4,000 feet, process at 12 pounds pressure.
- At altitudes of 4,001-6,000 feet, process at 13 pounds pressure.
- At altitudes of 6,001-8,000 feet, process at 14 pounds pressure.

At altitudes above 1,000 feet in a weighted-gauge canner, process at 15 pounds pressure.

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Pickled beets

7 pounds of 2- to 2 1/2-inch diameter beets
4 to 6 onions, peeled to 2 to 2 1/2 inches in diameter
(if desired)
4 cups white or cider vinegar (5 percent acidity)
1 1/2 teaspoons canning or pickling salt
2 cups sugar
2 cups water
2 cinnamon sticks
12 whole cloves

Trim off beet tops, leaving 1 inch of stem and roots to prevent bleeding of color during cooking. Wash thoroughly. Sort for size. Cover similar-sized beets with boiling water and cook until tender (about 25 to 30 minutes). Drain and discard liquid. (*Extra liquid will dilute the vinegar, making the product unsafe.*) Cool beets. Trim off roots and stems and slip off skins. Slice into 1/4-inch slices. If desired, peel and thinly slice onions. Combine vinegar, salt, sugar and 2 cups of fresh water. Put spices (cinnamon sticks and cloves) in cheesecloth bag and add to vinegar mixture. Bring to a boil. Add beets and onions. Simmer 5 minutes. Remove spice bag. Fill jars with beets and onions, and add vinegar solution, allowing for 1/2-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process. The boiling-water canner method is acceptable for pickled beets because the added vinegar makes them an acid food. Let jars stand undisturbed for 24 hours. Remove rings. Wash jars, label, date and store.

Recommended process times in boiling-water bath canner

Style of pack	Jar size	1-1,000 ft.	1,001-3,000 ft.	3,001-6,000 ft.	6,001-8,000 ft.
Hot	Pints or Quarts	30 min.	35 min.	40 min.	45 min.

Variation: Pickled whole baby beets. Follow above directions but use beets that are 1 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Pack whole – do not slice. Onions may be omitted.

For more recipes, see:

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2009). *Complete guide to home canning* (Rev. ed.). (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539). Washington, DC: Author. (http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html)

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. (2006). *So easy to preserve* (5th ed.). Athens, GA: Author. (<http://setp.uga.edu/>)

References

Michigan State University Extension. (2005). *How much should I buy? A guide to fresh fruits and vegetables for home cooking*. (CYFC064). East Lansing, MI: Author.

Andress, Elizabeth and Judy A. Harrison. *So Easy to Preserve*. Bulletin 989, 6th Edition. Cooperative Extension University of Georgia, 2014.

University of Illinois Extension. *Watch your garden grow*. Retrieved from <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/>

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This bulletin replaces E1887 Food Preservation Series – Beets (Michigan State University Extension, 1989).

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