Ingredient of the Month

Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University
Commonly known as the garden beet, this firm, round root vegetable has leafy green tops, which are also edible and highly nutritious. While the most common color for beets (called “beetroots” in the British Isles) is garnet red, they can range in color from deep red to purple and from yellow to white, allowing these vegetables to create a distinctively vibrant presentation. However, their most intriguing hue is concentric rings of red and white known as chioggia, or candy cane.

Aside from lending a dramatic impact to dish presentations, beets are also applauded for their texture, which allows them to be baked, boiled, roasted or served raw, and their unique sweetness allows them to pair well with butter as well as vinegar and citrus. They are available year-round, but the youngest, most tender beets are found from June through October. Even though beets have a high sugar content, they are low in calories and supply a variety of nutrients. Fresh beets can add great color, flavor, texture and nutritional quality to a variety of dishes.

Healthy ingredient contribution
- **ANTIOXIDANTS:** The red pigment found in beets is loaded with antioxidants that may help protect the body against heart disease, certain cancers and even birth defects.
- **FOLATE:** A half-cup serving of cooked beets provides about a quarter of the recommended daily requirements of folate. Folate is used in metabolic functions and plays a critical role during pregnancy, specifically in preventing certain birth defects.
- **IRON:** Beets are a good source of iron. While iron is considered a trace mineral, which means it’s needed in very small amounts, it is still critical to healthy blood because it’s a key component of hemoglobin.
- **MAGNESIUM:** Beets are high in magnesium, which is needed alongside calcium for production and maintenance of healthy bones.
- **POTASSIUM:** Being high in potassium, beets help maintain healthful blood pressure by maintaining proper fluid balance.

Varieties and uses
- **RAW BEETS** can be shredded or sliced into salads, as well as boiled, roasted, steamed, pickled and canned. They can also be used as a garnish or blended into fresh juice for color and sweetness.
- **PURÉED BEETS** were the original source of the red coloring found in red velvet cake and, today, many are sneaking beets back into this dessert and other baked goods to add not only color and texture, but also a healthful layer of nutrients.
- **BEET GREENS** can be steamed or sautéed, alone or with other vegetables.

Storage
Before storing or cooking, trim stems to about one inch to maintain nutrients and color. Store beets in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Serving size
½ cup cooked beets = approximately 40 calories

Warning: Keep in mind that beets also contain oxalates, which can increase the risk of kidney stones. Therefore, beets should not be eaten in large quantities by anyone with a history of kidney stones or kidney disease. Eating beets can also cause urine to turn red temporarily which can look frightening, but isn’t a cause for alarm.

*Andrea Musselwhite contributed to this article.*
Method:
1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Wrap beets in foil; bake until extremely tender, about 1 hour. Let cool. Peel; set aside one half of red beet for dressing. Dice remaining beets to ½-inch cubes.
3. Meanwhile, in medium saucepan, bring broth and quinoa to a boil. Reduce to a simmer; cover. Cook for 15-20 minutes, or until tender and all liquid has been absorbed. Remove from heat; let stand for 10 minutes. Transfer to bowl; cover. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4. Add cooked beets, cucumber, tomatoes and onion to cooled quinoa.
5. For dressing, place remaining beet half along with vinegar, lemon juice, olive oil, mustard, garlic, salt and pepper in blender or food processor; process until smooth. Pour over quinoa mixture; toss well to combine. Garnish with parsley, cilantro and cheese. Serve on lettuce leaves.

*This salad is a bright reddish-purple color. For a more neutral color, use all golden beets.

Nutrition Information

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories:</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Fiber:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat:</td>
<td>5g</td>
<td>Protein:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Fat:</td>
<td>1.5g</td>
<td>Vitamin A:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbs:</td>
<td>31g</td>
<td>Vitamin C:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>