Beets

Background
• Beets pair well with citrus flavors, salty cheeses, rich nuts, and vinaigrettes
• Beets are a sweet root vegetable that are available year-round and can be prepared a variety of ways.
• Beets come in 5 different varieties varying in color from a dark red to white to a golden yellow and are sometimes striped.
• Gardening history mentions root crops being grown by the early civilizations of Mediterranean Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.
• Beet greens were originally the only part of the beet that was consumed. In the 1500's, Northeast Europe was the first area to consume the root as a dietary staple because it grew well through the cold winter.

Nutritional Value
• Beet root is a very good source of fiber, folate, manganese, potassium, iron, and vitamin C.
• Beet root is high in betanin which is an anti-inflammatory antioxidant and supports healthy liver function
• Beet root has a high inorganic nitrate content which is helpful for reducing blood pressure and improving blood flow
• Beet greens are a good source of iron, protein, phosphorus, zinc, and fiber.
• Beet greens are high in vitamin A, vitamin K, vitamin B6, calcium, magnesium, and potassium.
How to Shop

- Choose beets that are heavy for their size and firm and smooth without any nicks or cuts.
- If the greens are still attached, they should be brightly colored and fresh.
- Beets are available year-round, but winter is the prime time for baby beets, which are sweeter and more tender.

How to Grow

- Beets do best in deep, well drained soil such as sandy soil. Plant seeds ½ inch deep and 1-2 inches apart.
- Beets like cool weather. It is best to plant them during cool weather when the soil reaches 50°F.
- Harvest about 50 and 70 days for most varieties from sowing.

How to Store

- Remove beet greens from the roots before storing, leaving about one inch of stem attached.
- Store beets in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to three weeks; beet greens should be used within a few days.

The Nourish Program provides a unique training for students and healthcare professionals utilizing a seed to plate initiative. www.nourishprogram.org