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Recipes provided by Tracy Dempsey of Tracy Dempsey Originals

### **Beet & Watermelon Salad,**

#### **Yield 2 servings**

- 1 large red or yellow beet(s) rinsed
- 1 small seedless watermelon
- 2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
- 4 leaves fresh mint, rinsed and dried
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil for the salad, plus extra for prepping the beet(s)
- 1 tablespoon local citrus blossom or desert flower honey
- Crunchy sea salt and coarse ground black pepper, to taste



#### **Recipe Instructions:**

Preheat oven to 400F.

1. Rinse the beet. Trim the “tail” (root end) off of the beet. Rub the outside with olive oil and tightly wrap it in aluminum foil. Place the foil wrapped beet on a sheet pan or an oven-proof dish to catch any liquid. Place the pan/dish in the middle of the preheated oven. Roast until a skewer inserted into the beet slides in easily and the beet feels soft, about 45-55 minutes depending on the size of the root vegetable. Remove the beet from the oven and allow it to cool briefly before removing the foil and the skin. The skin should come off easily with a paper towel. Place the peeled beet in a bowl in the refrigerator to cool completely.
2. Meanwhile, cut each end of the watermelon. Cut the watermelon in half. Place one melon half flat/flesh side down on a cutting board and carefully remove the rind. Repeat with the other half. Slice the melon halves into 1/2-inch thick slices. Cut the slices into sticks (baton) and then cubes (medium dice). Place the cubes in a bowl. Set aside in the refrigerator.
3. Slice the chilled beet into 1/2-inch thick slices, sticks, then into cubes. Place with the melon.
4. To finish the salad, using a large spoon gently combine the beet and melon cubes. Add the feta cheese, gently stir to combine. Transfer the salad to a serving platter. Tear the mint leaves by hand and sprinkle over the salad. Drizzle with a tablespoon of olive oil and a tablespoon of honey. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Serve.

**Planting Beets with Master Gardener Mr. Pikle:** Beets grow well as our desert climate cools. The beetroot grows to about 2-3 inches in diameter under the soil. Therefore, the seeds should be planted with enough space between each plant to make room for the growing root, about 2 to 3 inches apart. Plant the seeds about ½ deep in loose soil. Keep them well-watered for a week or so. You will start to see sprouts in 7 to 14 days. If you happen to plant the beets too close together you should *thin* sprouts so the plants are at least 2 to 3 inches apart. *Thinning* is a process where sprouts are pinched to prevent them from growing further. The roots will be ready to harvest in about 2 months. Hopefully, you'll "beet" me by getting these seeds into the soil before I do!

**The Colorful History of Beets:** Beets were first mentioned in Egypt in 800 BC in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. By 300 BC the beet was common in Ancient Greece and Rome, where the leafy greens were consumed more than the bulbous plant (the beetroot we are more familiar with eating today). Over time, as the popularity of the beet grew, the ancient Greeks and Romans started to grow the plant for the root in addition to the leaves, which has helped the beetroot evolve into the larger vegetable we know today.

Since their discovery, beets have been used for sugar, dyes, teas, and medicinal purposes. The natural sugar in beets can be removed, dried, and used as table sugar. While they are similar varieties, the sugar beet and the common garden beet you are planting are not the same. In the nineteenth century, women would use beet juice as lip and cheek stain. Women in Victorian England would also dye their hair with beets. Beets are still used today as colorants in foods like yogurt, sauces, and cereals.

**Beef up your Nutrition with Beets:** Beets are known for being rich in many nutrients. Betalain, the pigments in beets that give it its famous deep red color, and other compounds like carotenoids found in colorful fruits and vegetables, not only provide color to plants but also act as antioxidants. Antioxidants help to protect the cells in your body. Beets are also a good source of fiber to keep your gut healthy and a great source of iron. If you have eaten beets before you might have experienced "beeturia". Beeturia is when your urine (aka pee) turns pink after eating beets. Why is this happening? It turns out that some people absorb more of the pigment, and it ends up in your pee. Just how pink depends on how the beets are eaten, so fresh beets or beet juice might result in a stronger color while cooked beets might be less pink. So if you have pink pee after eating your beets don't panic! ([Sauder, 2022](#))

**Knife Skills:** Cooking tasty delicious meals can be relatively simple but it does require learning important cooking skills, like how to hold and use a knife properly. Knives are tools, not toys and should be treated with respect. When not appropriately used, they can be dangerous. To practice respect, only touch your knife when you are using it to cut one of your ingredients. Don't cut anything that you are not using for your recipe and be careful when giving knives to others (always handle out). The hand that is holding the food should look like a bear claw – fingers curled with thumb in. This protects your fingers in case the knife slips. Keep your eyes on the knife at all times. If you are distracted, you should stop cutting and place the knife carefully on the cutting board.

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