



Using, Storing and Preserving Beets



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Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Beets was first published in March 2015 and revised in July 2023. The original replaced E1887 *Food Preservation Series-Beets* (MSU Extension, 1989)

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



Food Safety and Storage

- Avoid using large beets greater than 3 inches in diameter.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Do not trim the root or tail (this prevents the color from bleeding).
- Wash beets thoroughly under cool running water. Do not use soap.
- Before storing, trim the stem to 2 inches above the beet.
- 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.
- Keep beets away from raw meats and meat juice to prevent cross-contamination.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

A bushel (without tops), weighs about 52 pounds	=	15-20 quarts (about 3 pounds/quart)
13½ 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 ½ 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 root, and cut into slices or cubes. Package, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Drying

Beets dry fairly easily. For best results, cut the beets into small shoestring-like strips ¼-inch thick. Because they are not acidic, dry them until they are brittle (10% moisture or less).

Cook beets as instructed for freezing or canning; cool and then peel, removing the root and stalk. Dry in a dehydrator for 10 to 12 hours. Since, they will be brittle, they are best used in soups or reconstituted as a vegetable.

Canning

Pressure canning is the *only* safe method of canning beets that aren't pickled. Beets *must* be pressure canned to avoid the potential of the foodborne illness botulism. For the best quality, use beets that are 1 to 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 ½-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 with a clean paper towel and adjust headspace if needed. Adjust lids and process (see tables that follow for recommended processing times).

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Recommended process time (in minutes) for beets in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
			0 – 2,000 ft	2,001 – 4,000 ft	4,001 – 6,000 ft	6,001 – 8,000 ft
Hot	Pints	30	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.
	Quarts	35	11 lb.	12 lb.	13 lb.	14 lb.

Recommended process time (in minutes) for beets in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time	Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of	
			0 – 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot	Pints	30	10 lb.	15 lb.
	Quarts	35	10 lb.	15 lb.

Let jars sit undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours, check lids to be sure they've sealed, remove rings, wash jars, date, label and store. Food in jars that do not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid within 24 hours, refrigerated or frozen.

Tables were adapted from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning: Guide 4: Selecting, Preparing and Canning Vegetables and Vegetable Products*, USDA, 2015, p. 9. https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html#gsc.tab=0

Pickled beets

7 pounds of 2- to 2½-inch diameter beets	2 cups sugar
4 to 6 onions, peeled to 2 to 2½ inches in diameter (if desired)	2 cups water
4 cups white or cider vinegar (5 percent acidity)	2 cinnamon sticks
1½ teaspoons canning or pickling salt	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 ¼-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 ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process (see table that follows for recommended processing times). The boiling-water canner method is acceptable for pickled beets because the added vinegar makes them an acid food. Let jars stand undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours. Remove rings, wash jars, date, label and store.

Variation: For pickled whole baby beets, follow previous directions but use beets that are 1 to 1½ inches in diameter. Pack whole – do not slice. Onions may be omitted.

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Recommended process time (in minutes) for pickled beets in a boiling-water canner.

Style of pack	Jar size	Process time at altitudes of			
		1 – 1,000 ft	1,001 – 3,000 ft	3,001 – 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Pints or quarts	30	35	40	45

Recipe for pickled beets was adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP), *Preparing and Canning Pickled Vegetables: Pickled Beets*, reviewed February 2018 (https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/pickled_beets.html). The NCHFP adapted it from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin, No. 539). USDA, 2015.

References

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