



Red Beets

Red beets can be preserved in a variety of ways. Beets can be pressure canned, frozen, or acidified with vinegar to pickle and then boiling water bath or atmospheric steam canned. There are even directions for beet relishes and for drying beets.

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Tips for Preparing the Beets

Regardless of the method of preservation, beets are cooked until tender or until soft enough to remove their skins.

- Trim off beet tops, leaving 1 inch of stem and roots to prevent bleeding of color.
- Wash, sort for size, cover similar sizes

together with boiling water and cook until tender (about 25 to 30 minutes).

- Drain and discard liquid. Do **not** use the cooking liquid for canning; it is dirty.
- Cool the beets, trim off roots and stems and slip off skins.
- Follow recipe directions for slicing, dicing, chunking, or using whole. If canning, the size of the cut beet pieces affects the processing time; therefore, if you use whole beets and the recipe calls for diced beets, you may be under processing the product.

Complete directions for canning and freezing beets are available in Penn State Extension [Let's Preserve Root Vegetables: Beets, Carrots, Turnips, and Rutabaga](#) .

Canning Beets

- **Plain red beets must be processed in a pressure canner for food safety.** Beets are a low acid food and require the higher temperatures possible in a pressure canner to destroy botulism spores.
- Although there are commercial applications for canning beets in a thickened sauce such as Harvard beets, it is not safe to try to replicate such recipes at home.
- Never add a thickener to canned beets as it will interfere with the transfer of heat into the food during processing.

• Sometimes canned red beets turn pale in color when pressure canned. According to Dr. Luke LaBorde, Professor of Food Science at Penn State University, “the red pigments in beets are sensitive to high temperature and can transform into a colorless compound during canning. Some varieties of beets are more sensitive to heat than others. The reaction is reversible and often the color of the canned product will return to a darker red after a few days of storage at room temperature.”

Pickled Beets

- [University of Georgia factsheet on pickling beets](#)
- When adequate vinegar is added to red beets, they are transformed from a low acid food to a high acid food. This is the case with pickled beets.
- Make sure that there is adequate vinegar in your red beet pickle recipe. Scientifically research tested recipes use more than ½ cup vinegar per pint jar.
- Pickled beets are safe to process in a boiling water bath or atmospheric steam canner.
- - The USDA recommends processing pickled beets in boiling water for 30 minutes.
 - **Do not** just pour the hot pickled beets into the jar and seal them without processing in a boiling water bath or atmospheric steam canner.
- When you open a jar of pickled beets, the pickle liquid can be used to make red beet eggs, a Pennsylvania Dutch tradition.

- Avoid substituting artificial sweeteners in a red beet pickle recipe unless you are using a research based recipe such as [No Sugar Added Pickled Beets](#) from the National Center for Home Food Preservation.
 - Sugar plays a role in the texture and the processing time for pickled beets.

Freezing Beets

- Slice or cube the cooked, skinned, and cooled beets.
- Leave ½ inch headspace.
- The quality and texture of frozen beets differs from that of canned beets.

Drying Beets

- Slice cooked beets ⅛ inch thick.
- Cut into shoestring strips or cut into ¼ inch dice.
- Dry in a dehydrator until leathery.
- Dried beets can be used in soups or reconstituted as a vegetable.