**Cooking Garden Fresh Beets**

To cook garden fresh beets, you can either boil, steam, or roast them. First, scrub the beets clean, trim the tops, and then choose your cooking method: boil them in water until tender, steam them in a steamer basket, or wrap them in foil and roast in the oven until fork-tender.

**Preparing Beets for Cooking**

Before cooking, it's essential to prepare the beets properly:

* **Wash**: Scrub the beets under running water to remove dirt.
* **Trim**: Cut off the stems and leaves, leaving about 2 inches of the stems to prevent bleeding.
* **Peeling**: It's not necessary to peel beets before cooking; the skins can be removed easily after cooking.

**Cooking Methods**

Beets can be cooked using several methods. Here are three popular techniques:

**Boiling**

1. Place whole beets in a pot and cover with water.
2. Add a splash of vinegar or lemon juice to help retain color.
3. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer.
4. Cook until fork-tender, about 30-45 minutes depending on size.
5. Cool under running water and peel.

**Steaming**

1. Fill a pot with water and place a steamer basket inside.
2. Bring the water to a boil.
3. Add the beets to the steamer basket and cover.
4. Steam until tender, about 30-40 minutes.
5. Cool and peel under running water.

**Roasting**

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. Wrap washed beets in aluminum foil with a drizzle of olive oil, salt, and pepper.
3. Place on a baking sheet and roast for about 45-60 minutes, until fork-tender.
4. Allow to cool, then peel.

**Serving Suggestions**

Cooked beets can be enjoyed in various ways:

* **Salads**: Toss in salads for added color and nutrition.
* **Sides**: Serve warm as a side dish.
* **Dips**: Blend into hummus for a vibrant dip.

**Health Benefits**

**Heart Health**

* Beets are rich in nitrates, which can help lower blood pressure and improve blood flow.

**Digestive Health**

* High in fiber, beets support digestive health and can help regulate blood sugar levels.

**Athletic Performance**

* The nitrates in beets may enhance exercise performance by improving oxygen use in muscles.

**Antioxidant Properties**

* Beets contain betalains, which have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

**Nutrient-Rich**

* Beets provide a variety of vitamins and minerals, including folate, potassium, and vitamin C, contributing to overall health.

Incorporating beets into your diet can be beneficial due to their rich nutritional profile and associated health benefits.