

"Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Happy New Year! It has certainly gotten off to an interesting start. For whatever reason, I was moved this month to find a quote about faith. Perhaps it's because I've been getting the feeling that many people are feeling lost and alone. But as you know, you have the power to CHOOSE to not feel that way. With that in mind, the interesting thing about this quote is that I came across it twice in the last few days. That's a sign. It's often easy to question our faith. I'm guilty of doing that from time to time. But deep down, I know that faith is believing in something when common sense tells us not to...or taking that first step when we don't know what lies ahead. Without faith, we have nothing. Life becomes so much simpler when we know that God is in control. If you need help, please reach out to me. In the meantime, it's been a while since I wrote about food, so I chose a superfood to help you start the new year with a healthy selection you might not have considered.

Yours in health,

Susan Monaco
Health and Wellness by Design
www.healthnwellnessbydesign.com
susan@healthnwellnessbydesign.com

Benefits of Beets



You probably haven't given beets a second thought. If you did, the word "YUK" probably crossed your mind. Beets are a vegetable I've only recently come to love. So it was a bonus to learn that they're an insane source of vitamins and minerals. Think of beets as red (or yellow or purple) spinach. Just like Popeye's power food, this colorful vegetable is one of the best sources of both folate and betaine. If you aren't a beet lover, hopefully you'll at least want to give them a try after learning a little more about them.

Here are some of their amazing benefits:

- **They're a natural aphrodisiac.** Believe it or not, they were used for this very purpose long ago by ancient Romans, who didn't have the benefit of toxic drugs like Viagra. Beets contain high amounts of boron, which assists in producing human sex hormones.
- **They're high in vitamins and minerals.** Beets contain potassium, fiber, phosphorus, magnesium and iron as well as vitamins A, B, C, beta-carotene, beta-cyanine and folic acid. They're a terrific food during pregnancy as the B vitamins and iron help with new cell growth.
- **They help support brain health.** As we age, our cognitive function declines. This may be caused by a reduction in the blood flow and oxygen supply to the brain. The nitrates in beets may improve this mental function by promoting the dilation of blood vessels, which therefore increases blood flow to the brain, particularly to the frontal lobe. This is the section of the brain associated with decision making and working memory.
- **They help shield against liver disease.** It does this by acting to lessen fatty deposits in your liver, especially those that have been brought about through diabetes, alcoholism or protein deficiency. They also help cleanse the liver, which works to purify the blood.
- **They create a sense of well-being.** Like chocolate, they contain tryptophan, a feel-good essential amino acid. However, I'll be the first to admit they don't taste nearly as good as chocolate!

- **They can help with depression and cardiovascular health.** Beets contain betaine, which is used in certain treatments for depression and is vital to good cardiovascular health. Betaine lessens your body's concentration of homocysteine, an inflammatory compound which is hurtful to your blood vessels because it can contribute to peripheral vascular disease, stroke and heart disease. They help keep your blood pressure in check. Raw beets seem to be more beneficial for this than cooked ones.
- **They can help with digestive health because of their fiber content.** One cup contains about 3.4 grams of fiber. Fiber has been associated with reducing the risk of colon cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- **They're a great source of energy.** While high in carbohydrates and sugar, they're released into your system gradually rather than quickly, which makes them a great instant energy and healthy source. Your body handles their carbohydrates much differently than it does processed foods that are also high in carbs.
- **The leaves of raw beets offer their own benefits.** They've been known to counter "garlic" breath. Hippocrates advocated using beet leaves for healing wounds.
- **They have the potential to help fight cancer.** Beets get their red color from Betacyanin, which is responsible for helping to fight cancer. There is something called Beet Therapy. Doctors have used it to get rid of tumors and to help people with blood diseases and leukemia.

Here are a few important tips to remember:

- Their red color isn't broken down in the body. It's possible that eating them may temporarily cause your urine and stool to have a reddish color. Don't freak out. It's completely harmless and will disappear once the beets are out of your system.
- When shopping, choose small or medium-sized beets whose roots are firm and whose skin is smooth and deep in color. Avoid beets with spots, bruises or soft, wet areas, all of which indicate spoilage. Avoid shriveled or flabby beets as these are signs the roots are aged, tough and fibrous.
- If you're going to eat the greens, which are super nutritious, make sure they appear fresh, tender and have a lively green color. When you cut them, leave about two inches of the stem attached to prevent the roots from "bleeding."
- Don't wash beets before storing them. The best way to store them is to put them in a plastic bag and wrap the bag tightly around them. Squeeze out as much air as possible. They'll keep for up to 3 weeks in the refrigerator. Store the unwashed greens in a separate plastic bag using the same process. They'll only keep for about four days.
- Raw beets don't freeze well since they tend to become soft upon thawing. Freezing cooked beets is fine and they'll retain their flavor and texture.
- Cook beets lightly. Studies show beets' concentration of phytonutrients, such as betalains, is diminished by heat.

Beets can be eaten raw or you can boil, steam, roast or sauté them. I personally prefer them roasted. Raw beets can be juiced but be aware, beet juice is EXTREMELY strong and powerful! Plus it can stain whatever it touches, so be careful about drips.

Beets are available all year, so eat them to your heart's content. The bottom line is that they're low in calories and full of nutrients, so why not give them a try? I personally think they pair beautifully with arugula and goat cheese for a super delicious salad.

Have a wonderful month!