

in the forecast), start pulling them out. Baby beets look cute and are sweet and tender. but wait a few more days for real beet flavour. Tear

### Candy Cane “Tomatoes”

From David Cohlmeier

Makes 2 pounds

*Chunks of tomato have become a featured ingredient in many salads. These beets provide an alternative, with their appealing pink colour, soft yet firm texture, and sweet-and-sour flavour. A sure winner in your salads!*

2-1/2 lbs medium Candy Cane (Chioggia) beets, or other variety, cleaned  
1 tbsp cold-pressed nut, grapeseed or extra-virgin olive oil

#### Marinade

3 tbsp cold-pressed nut, grapeseed or extra-virgin olive oil  
2 tbsp lemon juice, freshly squeezed  
1 clove garlic, minced (optional)  
1/2 tsp ground sea salt or kosher salt  
1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Rub the clean beets with the oil. Place in a large baking dish. Bake in 325°F oven or covered grill until tender and a paring knife can be inserted easily into centre of one beet, about 90 minutes.

Meanwhile, in small bowl, make the marinade. Whisk together the oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper; set aside.

Get ready a large bowl of ice water. Immerse the hot beets in ice water for about 10 seconds, just long enough to be able to handle them comfortably. Using a paring knife, slip off skins and discard.

Slice each beet into 8 even wedges and place in a large bowl. Add the marinade to the warm beets. Toss to coat well. Note: The flavours of the marinade are absorbed best when the beets are still warm. If they have cooled off, reheat briefly in the oven or microwave before adding marinade.

Add these “tomatoes” to your favourite salad. You can store them in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

off the stems and leaves to prevent juices from evaporating through the stems. The roots can be used right away or they can be stored for several months. They should be kept at just above the freezing point and at fairly high humidity (90 percent, or just high enough to see your breath in the storage room). If you’ve grown them well and store them “just right,” a fall-harvested beet will keep perfectly until spring.

#### Best Cooking

For the finest beet flavour, long and slow cooking is *de rigueur*. Slow baking in the winter months and slow grilling in the summer are my favourite methods. Since they take long to cook, it makes good sense to cook extra to keep in the refrigerator. Good beets cooked slowly are great as they are. If you feel obliged to do more, consider nothing more than a little acid to cut their sweetness, a little salt to highlight their taste, a little cold-pressed oil or butter to augment their essential oils, or a little pepper to awaken your taste buds. □

*David Cohlmeier is the founder of Cookstown Greens, which grows and delivers premium vegetables and salad greens to many of Toronto’s most critically acclaimed restaurants, hotels and caterers.*

For an easy yet elegant salad using these roasted beets, prepare another batch of the marinade. Toss thinly sliced Belgian endives with a bit of the marinade. Plate the salad as shown here, and sprinkle chopped fresh mint (or any other fresh herb) on top. Place goat cheese-topped baguette slices under the broiler until golden brown, and serve alongside.



Photograph: Gail Gordon Oliver