

# EAT YOUR BEETS!

Modern beets are derived from wild sea beets that originated around the coasts of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

There are many types of wild beets, but the most common are red beets and yellow beets, called golden beets. Red beets get their color from a pigment called "betalain."

The greens attached to the beetroots – beet greens - are delicious and can be prepared like spinach or Swiss chard.



The wild beet is believed to have descended from the sea beet (*Beta maritima*) and originated in the Mediterranean. It has been cultivated since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

The leaves were first used for medicinal purposes by the ancient Greeks, and then later used as an herb when cooking. The ancient Romans were some of the first to cultivate and develop beets for their roots and used them for feeding animals. Greeks were the first to consume both roots and leaves.

The sugar beet (or “white beet”) was developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and, in the early 1800s, the French began extracting the sugar. Sugar beets are the second most important source of sugar after the sugar cane.



Colonists brought red and sugar beets to America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Red and golden beets are an excellent source of manganese, folate, and riboflavin.

