

Garden diary : beetroot

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Chuchichäschtli (Kitchen Cupboard)

Zwetschgkuchen

Ingredients (for 20 portions):

Dough

- ♥ 4 cups all-purpose wheat flour
- ♥ 30g baker's yeast, see note
- ♥ 4 tablespoons sugar
- ♥ 1 cup milk
- ♥ 1/3 cup butter, unsalted and melted
- ♥ 1 egg
- ♥ 1 pinch salt

Filling

- ♥ 1.75kg damson plums, see note

Topping

- ♥ 4 tablespoons sugar
- ♥ 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions:

Sift flour into a large bowl and make a well in the middle. Crumble yeast into well and mix it with one tablespoon of sugar, milk and some flour. This first yeast-mixture should be still fluid. Cover and let rise in warm place for 20 minutes. Add remaining sugar, melted butter, egg and a good pinch of salt, and mix with yeast mixture and flour.

Knead with floured hands until dough is peeling away from the side of the bowl and blistering. This step may take 10 minutes (or more). Use some additional flour, if dough is too sticky. At the end, you should have a smooth dough. Cover and let rise in warm place for about 25 to 30 minutes or until dough has doubled.

Meanwhile, prepare the plums. Cut lengthwise and pit them. Cut the still connected plum halves once again lengthwise, but do not cut through. You should have a depitted plum which you can easily flatten.

Grease a baking tray: The dough is calculated for a tray of 30 x 38 cm. Remove yeast dough from bowl, knead once or twice, and roll out on baking tray using a floured rolling pin. Along the sides of the baking tray, form a border with yeast dough. Place plums on yeast dough in tight rows and press slightly into dough. Let rise again for 15 minutes.

Preheat oven (425F, 220°C). Bake the plum cake in the middle of the oven for 20 to 25 minutes. Meanwhile, mix sugar and ground cinnamon for topping. Remove plum cake from oven and sprinkle with sugar-cinnamon mixture. Cut into 20 pieces and serve warm or cold with whipped cream.

NOTE on baker's yeast: If possible use fresh baker's yeast. But you can replace it by 1 1/2 packages dry yeast.

NOTE on Damson Plums: A traditional German Plum Cake is made with the slightly tart and not too juicy Damson Plums. You can also use other plum varieties, but the plums shouldn't be over-ripe or too juicy. I have tried it with other plum varieties and have reduced the amount of sugar in topping.

NOTE on traditional German Plum Cake: In my opinion, this cake has to be made with yeast dough. It takes more time to make than other doughs, but it is worthwhile. Don't be afraid of the juices. This cake has to be juicy!

There are several existing names for this type of fruit cake in Germany: Zwetschgkuchen, Pflaumenkuchen and in Bavaria Zwetschgendatschi. Zwetschggen is the German name for Damson plums.

By Edith Hess



Garden Diary: Beetroot

The nights are getting cooler and days shorter. It's time to add more winter root crops to your vege plot. All can be eaten within 60 days at golf ball size. Most are better planted directly to prevent root disturbance such as carrots, swedes and turnips, but beetroot can be sown into trays and is easy to raise from seed. If sown now, it will be ready to eat in late winter or early spring.

For best results, soak seeds overnight in warm water before sowing, as this helps to speed up germination. Scatter generously either in rows in the garden or planter box on the deck or in trays, depending on where you want to grow them.

Baby beetroot leaves are edible and are a nice addition to a winter salad, or cook the leaves like spinach. The Bull's Blood variety has dark red leaves and is ready to pick in 35 days for baby leaves or in two months for the red globes.

If you want big beets, sow in rows 2-5cm deep and thin to 20cm apart. Add a little lime to soil several weeks before planting out and don't add fresh manure as this

causes splitting and forking of the roots. A general fertiliser raked in prior to planting will give the seedlings an excellent start.

Beetroot prefer an open sunny site to grow, as they will fail in shady conditions. Keep the seed bed damp as they have a high moisture requirement for germination, hence soaking the seeds first can help.

Thinned seedlings when still very small may be transplanted; just take care not to damage the roots by planting into a ready made hole and watering generously. Keep the roots weeded, taking care not to damage them. Water well in dry conditions, taking care not to over-water which encourages leaf production rather than roots.

Beets will keep in the fridge for weeks and can be bottled, pickled or made into chutney or a colourful hummus as shown in the recipe.



Beetroot Hummus

Ingredients

- ♥ 400g cooked beetroot
- ♥ 400g can chickpeas rinsed and drained
- ♥ 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- ♥ 1tbsp lemon juice
- ♥ 1/2 cup Greek-style yoghurt
- ♥ 2 tbsps extra virgin olive oil

Directions

Process beetroot, chickpeas, garlic, lemon juice, yoghurt and half the olive oil until smooth. Season to taste with salt & pepper. Transfer to serving bowl and drizzle with the remaining olive oil. Serve with Pita bread and fresh vege sticks. Makes about two cups.

Enjoy!

By Melissa Lanz

Sources: Australian WW,
Home Vege Garden NZ
Garden Magazine

