

BEEF, BEETS AND BLUE

Grilled beef filet served with sautéed batonnets of red and golden beets complemented with leeks, beet greens and garlic chips topped with tiny garlic infused croutons and crumbles of rich blue cheese

WINE PAIRING:

*Peirson Meyer Pinot Noir
Sonoma Stage Vineyard, Sonoma Coast*



A FEW NOTES ABOUT BEETS

In addition to their show stopping color, beets are rich in vitamin K and are a good source of fiber. Beet greens are loaded with vitamin A and K. Beetroot juice has been shown to lower blood pressure, and recent scientific research has shown that beetroot possesses antioxidant properties and can inhibit tumour growth.

The beet (*Beta vulgaris*) has a long history of cultivation stretching back to the second millennium B.C. In today's markets the red beet is the most prevalent variety, however the stunning variegated Chiogga and Golden Beet are making their way more and more into the marketplace. For this presentation you will be peeling the beets in their raw state; so for ease in peeling, choose large beetroots. Look for unblemished beets with crisp, bright greens.

INSPIRATION

In Del Mar California there is a spectacular farm called Chino's with the most beautiful fruits and vegetables. My friend Anne Nugent prepared a wonderful meal of sautéed beets, beet greens, and garlic from the Chino's Vegetable Stand, which was the inspiration for this recipe. I added leeks, orange and lemon zest for depth of flavor, garlic croutons for texture contrast and blue cheese to contrast the sweet earthy flavors of the beets.

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YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

THE INGREDIENTS

Four	Beef Filets (1 inch thick)
Five Large	Red beets with greens
Five Large	Golden beets with greens
One	Lemon (zest)
One	Orange (zest)
Two Large	Leeks, or 4 small leeks
Two ounces	Mild blue cheese (Maytag, St. Agur, etc)
Five Tablespoons	Pure Olive oil
Five Cloves	Garlic, peeled and sliced very thin
Two pinches	Cayenne Pepper
Four Slices	Sourdough Bread (enough to make 1 cup of croutons)
Four Teaspoons	Aged Balsamic Vinegar
To Taste	Salt
To Taste	Fresh Cracked Black Pepper

THE PROCESS

- 1 Take the beef filets out of the refrigerator 1-2 hours before cooking and season both sides with salt. Leave uncovered and let the filets come to room temperature before grilling.
- 2 In the meantime, prepare the beets. Cut off the beet greens and soak in a large bowl of cold water to remove any dirt. Dry the greens thoroughly in a salad spinner or between two towels.
- 3 Next cut out the large portion of the center rib of the beet green and discard the rib. Stack the beet leaves and slice crosswise in approximately quarter inch strips and set aside.
- 4 Remove the beet skins with a peeler or a knife and cut beets into ¼ inch sticks. Plastic gloves will save cleaning the stains on your hands. Keep both colors of the beets separate.
- 5 Heat 2 medium sauté pans over medium heat, add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to each pan. Separate the thinly sliced garlic evenly into three piles; one pile for each pan of beets and one for later, to finish the croutons. Sauté the thinly sliced garlic in each pan until barely golden. Remove the garlic slices and save for later.

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THE PROCESS - CONTINUED

6 In the heated sauté pans, keeping each beet color separate, sauté the beets in the garlic infused oil. Season with a pinch or two of salt, stirring occasionally, until just tender, about 10-12 minutes. Add in lemon and orange zest, toss and remove both pans from stove; set aside. The beets may be served at room temperature or gently heated to serve.

7 Next prepare the leeks. Slice the leeks in half lengthwise and then in half again. Slice the quarters into ¼ inch slices crosswise. Soak in a large bowl of cold water, stirring them to remove any dirt. Repeat if the leeks are very dirty. Remove the leeks and either spin dry in a salad spinner or dry between two towels.

8 Heat 1 large sauté pan over medium heat and add 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Add the leeks and the chopped beet greens to the pan, cover and let cook down, stirring occasionally until tender, about 5 minutes. Salt to taste and add the cayenne, one or two pinches, depending on your preference. Turn off the heat, leave uncovered. You will be rewarming the leeks and beets just before serving.

9 Put your plates in the oven on low to warm. Open our Sonoma Stage Pinot Noir and pour into a decanter.

10 Just before you are ready to grill, prepare the croutons. Remove the crust and cut the bread into tiny croutons (1/8 inch). Heat two tablespoons of olive oil in a pan until hot, but not smoking. Add the tiny croutons, tossing repeatedly for about minute, then add the last of the garlic and continue to cook and toss for about another minute or so until all are lightly golden and crunchy, turn off the heat and remove the croutons and garlic with a slotted spoon onto a paper towel; season lightly with salt.

11 Heat your barbeque nice and hot (either gas or coal) and put the filets on for about 3-4 minutes per side for rare, 4-5 minutes each side for medium rare, depending on the heat of your barbeque. While the filets are cooking on the last side, put the three pans (red beets, golden beets and leeks/greens) back on low heat to warm. Check seasoning and add salt if necessary.

12 Remove the filets when done. Just before dishing up, add 2 teaspoons of aged balsamic vinegar to each of the pans of beets and toss until the balsamic evenly coats the beets. Set out your warmed plates and portion out one quarter of each of the beets and greens onto each plate along with the filet.

13 Garnish the leeks and greens with the reserved garlic chips, tiny croutons and crumbled blue cheese and a twist of the black pepper onto the filet. Serve with the decanted Sonoma Stage Pinot and enjoy this combination of earthy sweet flavors and the crunchy, salty richness of "Beef, Beets and Blue".

VARIATION

For a non-meat version of this recipe that is equally satisfying, prepare the beets, greens, leeks, croutons and blue cheese as above and serve with a creamy soft polenta and poached eggs.

Recipe by Lesley Warner-Peirson

Photography by Faith Echtermeyer