

# Extension

## Seasonal Eating Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

### Farmers' Market Surprises June 2012

I visited the Rutherford County Farmers' Market this week to see what was growing and get inspired for a salad for dinner. As I perused the booths, I saw a variety of items, all suited to a delicious tossed salad – lettuces, summer squash, cabbage, tomatoes and peas.

But as I came to one of the last booths, I found one of my favorite salad ingredients – beets. I love the earthy, sweet flavor of roasted fresh beets. At the same booth was a head of escarole – a bitter green head of elongated leaves with a white rib down the center and curly green edges – and a head of sweet green leaf lettuce. Great! The bitter escarole and the sweet leaf lettuce will balance with the earthy beets and the spring onions from another booth. Now all I



need is a little something extra. Hmm – “Would you like to try some goat cheese?”, came the voice from the next booth. Creamy, slightly tart and melt in your mouth good, actually some of the best goat cheese I’ve had. Now since I want to celebrate June Dairy Month with a cheese in my salad and the tangy flavor complements the beets, in the bag it goes and I’m off to the kitchen at home.

Roasted fresh beets are very different from canned beets so I implore you to give them a try, even if you don’t think you like beets. Trim the greens to an inch or so, wash and place on foil. Drizzle with a little olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Wrap with the foil and bake at 400 degrees until tender to a fork, about an hour or so for medium sized beets. When they are cool enough to handle, peel with a paring knife and slice. Now usually I’m prepared to wash everything down after peeling and slicing my beets since the dark red color goes everywhere, but I’m a little shocked when I cut into my beet and it’s white with a red outer edge. What happened? I know sometimes the color leaches out a little when cooked but this was more than I had ever seen. I tasted a slice and found the delicious sweet beet flavor so I made my salad of escarole and leaf lettuce tossed with spring onions and a honey dressing and topped with the beets, herbed goat cheese buttons and toasted walnuts – yum! I had a perfect farmers’ market fresh and tasty salad.

Back at the office, I did a little research to see what was going on and discovered that I had probably purchased Chioggia beets (sometimes called candy cane beets). These bright red beets on the outside are red and white striped on the inside when raw but often lose their color when cooked. They were delicious and worked just fine in my salad but sometimes you get surprises shopping the farmer’s market and trying new things. At

least I didn't have to worry about staining anything! You can see what produce you want to try at our Bedford County Farmers' Market on Thursdays at 3:00 p.m. at the Celebration Pavilion. See you at the market.

For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>). The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on Sensational Salads will be held on Wednesday, June 20 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$5.00 to cover the samples.

### Beet Salad with Goat Cheese Buttons and Honey Dressing

- 3-4 medium beets
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 5 ounces goat cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1/2 cup toasted and chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon poppy seeds
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped green onions
- 4 cups green leaf lettuce, washed and torn
- 2 cups escarole, washed and torn (or arugula)
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 1/4 cup walnut halves, toasted

Cut the stems from the beets, leaving about 1". Place on a sheet of aluminum foil and drizzle with a little olive oil, salt and pepper. Wrap up in foil and bake at 400 degrees for about an hour or until tender. Let cool slightly before peeling and slicing. Meanwhile, make the herbed goat cheese buttons by stirring together the goat cheese, chives, oregano and thyme. Place on a sheet of plastic wrap and form into a log about 1" in diameter. Wrap in plastic and freeze for at least 30 minutes or until firm. Remove from plastic, roll in walnuts and slice into 1/4" rounds. For dressing, whisk together oil, honey, vinegar, mustard, poppy seeds, salt and green onions. For the salad, combine lettuce, escarole and green onions. Toss with enough dressing to coat lightly. Place on four plates and top with beets, goat cheese buttons and walnuts. Drizzle with a little remaining dressing, if desired.