



Mâche, Lettuce, and Beet Salad

Wed, 12/11/2013 - 14:11 -- Barbara Damrosch

Introduction:

This is one of our favorite hearty wintertime salads. It makes a fine light supper dish, accompanied by a loaf of bread with butter or cheese, but it could also be paired at lunch with soup, sandwiches, or pasta. The contrast between the pale lettuce heart, the deeper green of the mâche, and the crimson beets makes it handsome to look at, too. Baked beets are singularly delicious, so you may want to cook more than this recipe calls for and set some aside. I find that the extra-long baking time pays off abundantly in flavor and texture?the beets become very soft, full-flavored, and caramelized. A bit of maple syrup in the dressing adds to their natural sweetness.

Preparation:

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Trim the beets so that just a bit of stem remains. You can leave the tails (the thin roots) on. Scrub the beets and let them dry. Do not peel them.
3. Wrap the beets individually in aluminum foil and place them in a small casserole or ovenproof pot. Cover, and bake for 3 hours (4 hours if you are using large beets, 2 for small ones).
4. While the beets are baking, make the dressing: Combine the oil, vinegar, and maple syrup in a small screw-top jar. Set it aside.
5. Remove the beets from the casserole and unwrap the foil. Set them aside to cool for about 5 minutes. Then trim off the stems and tails, and peel off the skin.
6. Cut the beets in half lengthwise; then slice them crosswise and place them in a bowl. While they are still warm, vigorously shake the dressing in the jar to mix it well, and immediately pour half of it over the beets. Season the beets with salt and pepper to taste, and stir gently to coat them with the dressing.
7. Rinse and dry the lettuce leaves, discarding any outer leaves that are at all tough and less than perfect, so that what you have is mostly the pale yellow-green heart. Gently tear the leaves into smaller pieces and place them in a bowl.
8. Rinse the mâche thoroughly and pat it dry. If your mâche plants are 3 inches across or less, leave the heads whole. If larger, pinch off the root ends to separate the heads into individual leaves. Add the mâche to the lettuce.
9. Shake the rest of the dressing in the jar, and add it to the greens. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Toss gently, and then spread the greens out over a platter or shallow dish. Distribute the beets over the center of the greens, and serve immediately.

Image (optional):

