



DIETITIAN'S CORNER


Here is some interesting info about some of the ingredients used by Chef Gabriele in his recipe.

VEGAN BEETROOT RISOTTO

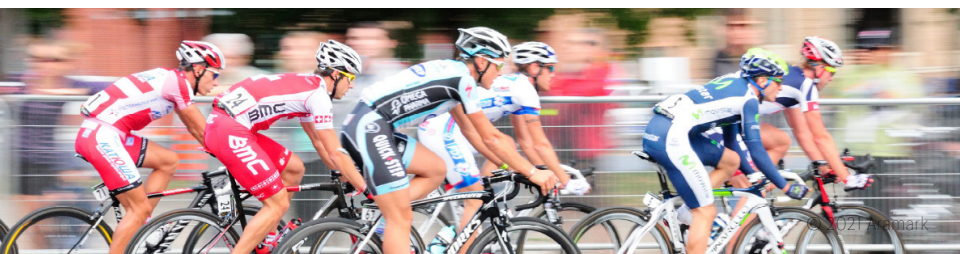
Beets

Many of us have started eating beets only in its pickled form, which is unfortunate, because the fresh ones offer so much versatility and depth of flavours! We are also more familiar with the deep red version, although some golden, white and even striped variety (called “Chioggia”) can be found.

Did you know?



Beets are rich in natural nitrates, which not only help deliver oxygenated blood to the muscles by helping dilate the arteries but also enable the body to extract more energy from that oxygen. Some studies made with athletes demonstrated that the consumption of beet juice gave them greater endurance while using less oxygen, hence improving their performance.






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Beets are extremely nutritious, rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, which “clean up” damaging molecules called free radicals that can harm cells and blood vessels. They also have high levels of a phytonutrient called betalain, which helps to reduce inflammation, a major contributor to heart disease and cancer, among other health conditions.

Their earthy, yet sweet flavour (especially when you roast them!) complements everything from salads to desserts, and the red variety can give a vibrant pink tone to hummus; which is quite on-trend! As the stripes tend to fade during cooking, keep the striking Chioggia variety raw, it will make a spectacular addition to any salad or nourish bowl!

Fun facts:



Betacyanins, a type of compound found in red beets can impart a bright red colour to the urine. No need to rush to the doctor when this happens, it's perfectly normal, although scary, one has to admit! This condition, known as beeturia, affects 10–14% of the population, and is caused by the betacyanins being incompletely broken down by the acidity in the stomach, and passing into the urine after being filtered by the kidneys.

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Garlic

Garlic has been used as a medicine for a wide range of conditions and diseases throughout ancient and modern history, while also being widely used as an essential flavouring ingredient in cooking.

Nowadays, many scientific studies support the effects of garlic in a wide range of application. Different compounds in garlic are thought to reduce the risk for cardiovascular diseases, have anti-tumour and antimicrobial effects, and show benefit on high blood glucose concentration. Although the exact physiological mechanisms explaining these effects are still not very well known, the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties found in garlic (as well as the other member of the Allium family, i.e. onions, leeks, chives) seem to be some of the best researched pathways.





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Cashews

Cashews are undeniably the rising stars of the plant-based world! Their creaminess helps achieve consistency desired in many plant-based, animal-free recipes, such as the “vegan cheese” our chef Gabriele introduced in the risotto recipe, or other dairy alternatives such as cashew milk or cashew-based cream sauces or dressings. Taste-wise, they offer the perfect solution: plenty of richness, but with a “neutral” taste that combines well into any savoury dish recipe.

Cashews are calorie-dense, mainly due to a high content in fats, mostly monounsaturated and polyunsaturated (the good ones!) but do also contain carbohydrates and protein. As many other types of nuts, they contain many vitamins, minerals such as magnesium, manganese and copper which are important for brain health, immunity, bone health, and have demonstrated their ability to decrease risk of many chronic diseases.

To soak or not to soak?

Many raw vegan recipes call for nuts that are blended, and the soaking step helps soften them prior to blending to ensure smoothness. Besides its effect on the texture, soaking also improves the flavour by extracting (and rinsing away) the tannins, which often give raw nuts an astringent aftertaste. The result is a softer, more buttery nut flavour. Last but not least, soaking facilitates the absorption of the nutrients by increasing enzyme activity.