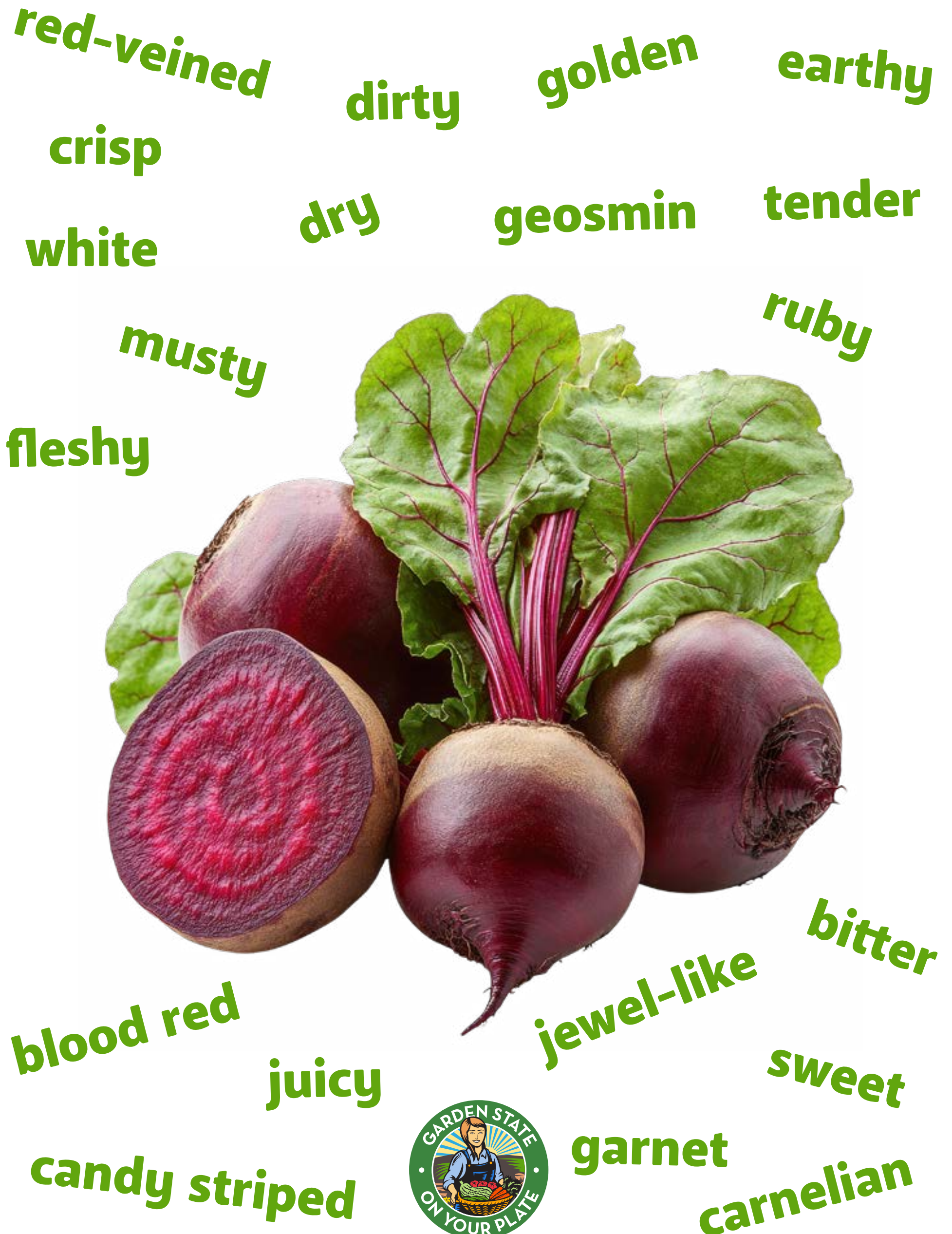


# WORDS THAT DESCRIBE **BEETS**

FLAVOR • COLOR • TEXTURE



**Looking Back**

# History

**Wild sea beet has thrived around the coastlines of Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia since prehistoric times and still can be foraged and eaten. Ancient Mediterraneans began cultivating this plant for its leafy greens.**

**These greens, known as “chard”, were domesticated around 2000 BC to season the soups of Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and other coast dwellers. Beet was mentioned in an Assyrian text as growing in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon in around 800 BC. Beetroots, with their swollen taproot, started to appear about 500 BCE.**



**What's in a Name?**

# Beta vulgaris, aka...

**Beets also are known as beetroot, table beet,  
garden beet, red beet, Harvard beet, and  
blood turnip**



# **Around the World**

**The Smithsonian: “Once upon a time, around 2,000 B.C., there grew a magical plant in the Mediterranean region. Ancient civilizations heralded the plant as a miraculous food source and lauded its high nutrient content, long storability, and adaptability to a wide variety of climates. Hearing of its splendor, people everywhere—from Thebes to the Netherlands—planted its seeds and reaped its bounty. So beloved was the plant that people continue to cultivate it to this day.” The Dutch who first settled in what is now New York, parts of New Jersey, Delaware, and Connecticut, introduced beets to the region. They were being grown in US gardens by the 1800s, and were planted in the gardens at Mount Vernon.**



**The Spoken Word  
Google Translates**

# Words for Beets

**Jerry James Stone writes, in “What Am I Even Eating?:” “Our word ‘beet’ comes to us by way of Old English ‘bēte’ which came from the ancient Latin ‘beta.’ The scientific binomial ‘Beta vulgaris’ is a combination of the ancient Latin name and the Latin word that means ‘common’.”**

**Latin:** beta

**Arabic:** binjar, رجب

**Cantonese:** 甜菜

**Farsi/Persian:** choghander, رذن غچ

**French:** betterave

**German:** rote bete

**Haitian Creole:** bètrav

**Hindi:** chuqandar, चुकंदर

**Japanese:** bitsu, ビーツ

**Mandarin:** tiáncài, 甜菜

**Spanish:** remolacha

**Swahili:** mizizi ya beet

**Ukrainian:** buryak, буряк



# Heart and Soul

# Art &

# Literature

**Beets are mentioned in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, made in Ptolomeic Egypt in the third century BCE. The beet plant is mentioned in two comedies ("The Acharneans" and "Peace") by Aristophanes (~444-385 BC), performed in Athens in about 420 BC. Beets are featured in murals on walls in ancient Pompeii. Swollen beet roots are illustrated and described in the 1587 French herbal Historia Generalis Plantarum of Jacques Dalechamps.**



James Peale, Still Life with Vegetables, 1826



**A Closer Look**

# Botany

**Beta vulgaris maritima, also known as sea beet, is the parent of the four main cultivated Beta crops: leaf beet, garden or table beet, fodder beet, and sugar beet. Beets are one of the most salt tolerant vegetables.**

**A beet is a taproot. Taproots are a large, dominant root that forms centrally out of the base of certain plants.**

**Geosmin, which smells like wet soil, is the chemical compound that gives beets an earthy aroma and flavor. The beet is a member of the goosefoot family, Chenopodiaceae.**



**Ripe for the Picking**

# **Season's Best**

**New Jersey beets are at their peak in flavor when freshly harvested - June through November. With properly cold and humid storage, however, beets may be kept for several months. Though small to medium-size beets have better flavor and texture, large beets keep better, because they shrivel more slowly.**



**Soil+Sun+Water**

# In the Garden

**Beets are cool-weather crops; plant as soon as soil can be worked, and plant seeds in sunny, well-prepared soil with pH between 6.0 and 7.0. For a fall harvest, sow beet seeds from mid-summer through early fall, starting about 4 to 6 weeks before first frost. To speed germination, or when planting in dry areas, soak the seeds in water for 24 hours before planting.**

Companion plants: arugula, green beans, kale, calendula, nasturtium



GARDEN STATE ON YOUR PLATE <sup>SM</sup> IS A PROJECT OF THE PRINCETON SCHOOL GARDENS COOPERATIVE, PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND POMPTONIAN FOOD SERVICE, WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM BENT SPOON, WHOLE EARTH CENTER, LILLIES BAKERY, AND CHURCH & DWIGHT EMPLOYEE GIVING FUND.

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**By The Numbers**

# Math & Money

**The majority of New Jersey's commercial vegetable production, including beets, is concentrated in the southern part of the state - in counties including Cumberland, Gloucester, Atlantic, and Salem.**

**Beet juice is used as an ingredient and/or a dye in many processed food items, including powdered drink mixes, cosmetics, meat products, yogurts, and ice creams.**



# In the Kitchen

**Beets often are eaten raw, roasted, steamed, pickled, simmered into a soup; in Greece, beet juice is served as a drink, with a twist of lemon. Take care to protect food preparation surfaces and consider wearing gloves; beet juice can be used as a food dye.**



**Winter Squash and...**

# **Ingredient Pairings**

**Elizabethans ate beets in tarts and stews. Beets are closely associated with Eastern European countries including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, and the Jewish Diaspora from those places. Beets also played parts in the cuisines of the Baltics, Scandinavians, Balkans, and Germany.**

## **INGREDIENTS THAT GO WELL WITH BEETS**

apples • allspice • arugula • butter • cheese  
chives • dill • eggs • fennel • garlic • ginger • honey  
lemon • lime • mint • olive oil • onion • sour cream  
tarragon • walnuts • vinegar



# CLIMATE IMPACT OF BEETS

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

## Greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food product

Our World  
in Data

Greenhouse gas emissions<sup>1</sup> are measured in kilograms of carbon dioxide-equivalents<sup>2</sup>. This means non-CO<sub>2</sub> gases are weighted by the amount of warming they cause over a 100-year timescale.



Data source: Poore and Nemecek (2018)

OurWorldinData.org/environmental-impacts-of-food | CC BY

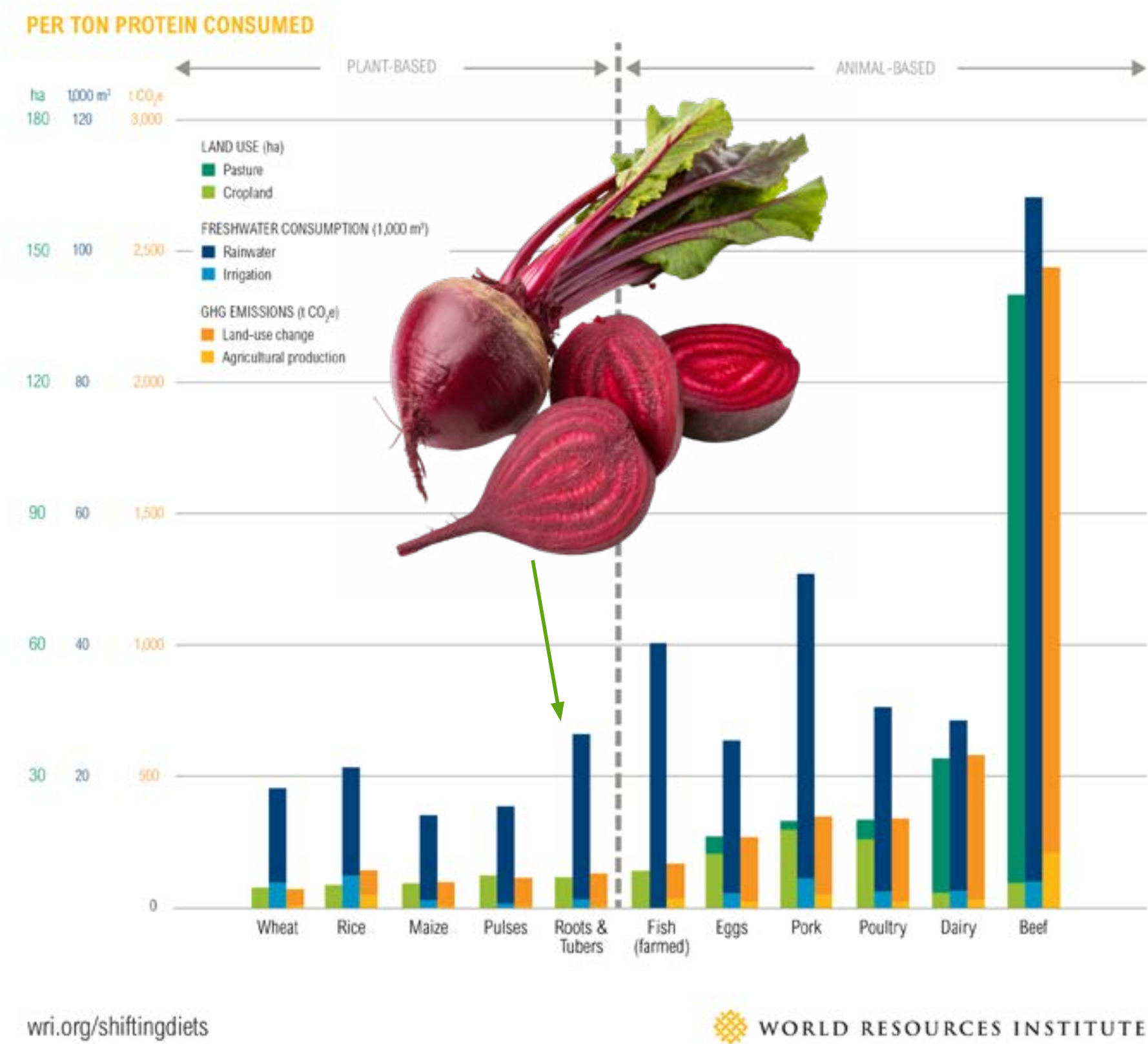
Cultivated beets were derived from the wild sea beet, and can tolerate saline soils. Additionally, beets have deep roots that enable efficient access to water, making them a more sustainable crop than some.



# RESOURCE INTENSITY OF BEETS

ONLY THOSE GROWN LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

Animal-Based Foods Are More Resource-Intensive than Plant-Based Foods



Cultivated beets were derived from the wild sea beet, and can tolerate saline soils. Additionally, beets have deep roots that enable efficient access to water, making them a more sustainable crop than some.



## **Garden State on Your Plate**

# **Beet Tasting**

Wash beets thoroughly, rubbing gently to remove all traces of soil. Rinse, then lay out on a clean kitchen towel to dry. To taste beets, first observe all varieties whole. What are their colors? How smooth are their skins? Do they have stray roots?

Cut the beets in half, and in the case of Chioggia, both horizontally and vertically. What patterns do you see? How do those patterns compare with other patterns in nature? How juicy is the flesh?

Grate each beet and sample each beet, plain. Compare and contrast sweet, bitter, sour, and salty, along with the levels of geosmin.

Try each with a drop of lemon or orange juice, a dash of salt, a drop of olive oil, both citrus and salt, and finally, a combination of some, and then, all, of the flavorings. Are flavors enhanced by any/all of the additions?

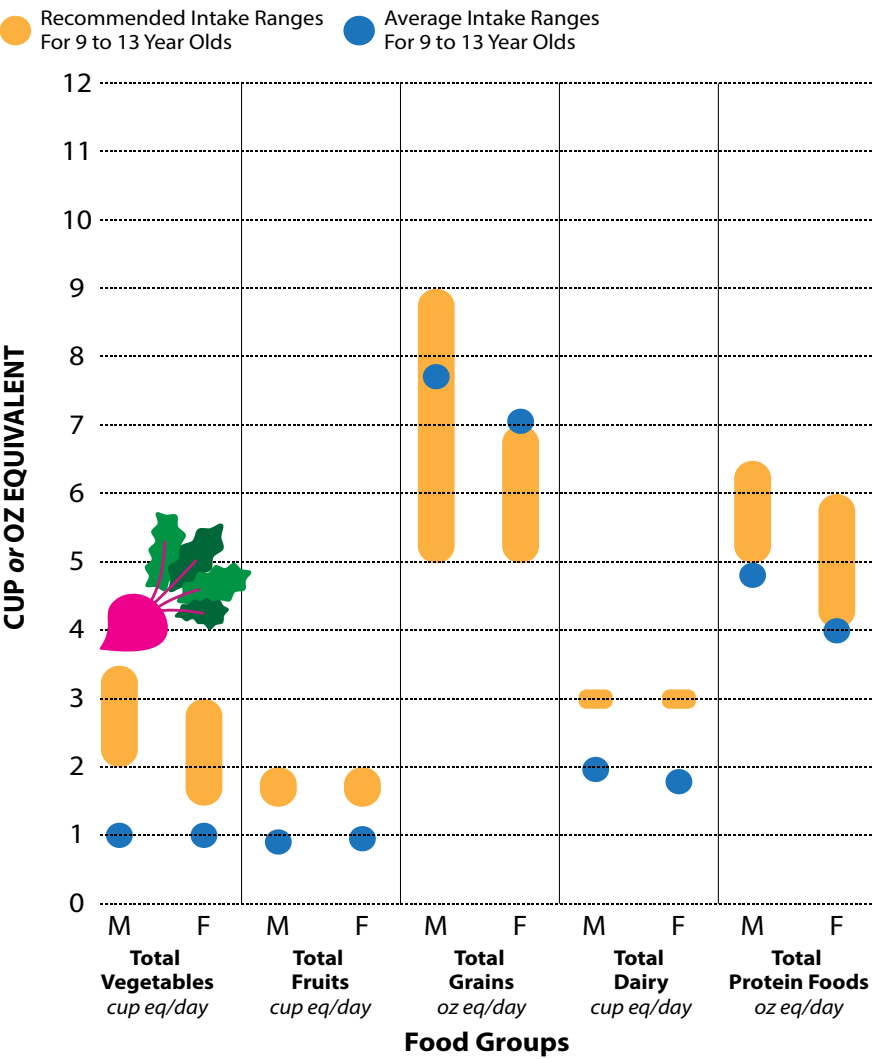
Taste roasted beets, and boiled beets. Which cooking method accents which properties of beets? Which versions pair best with feta or goat cheese? With roasted walnuts or pecans?



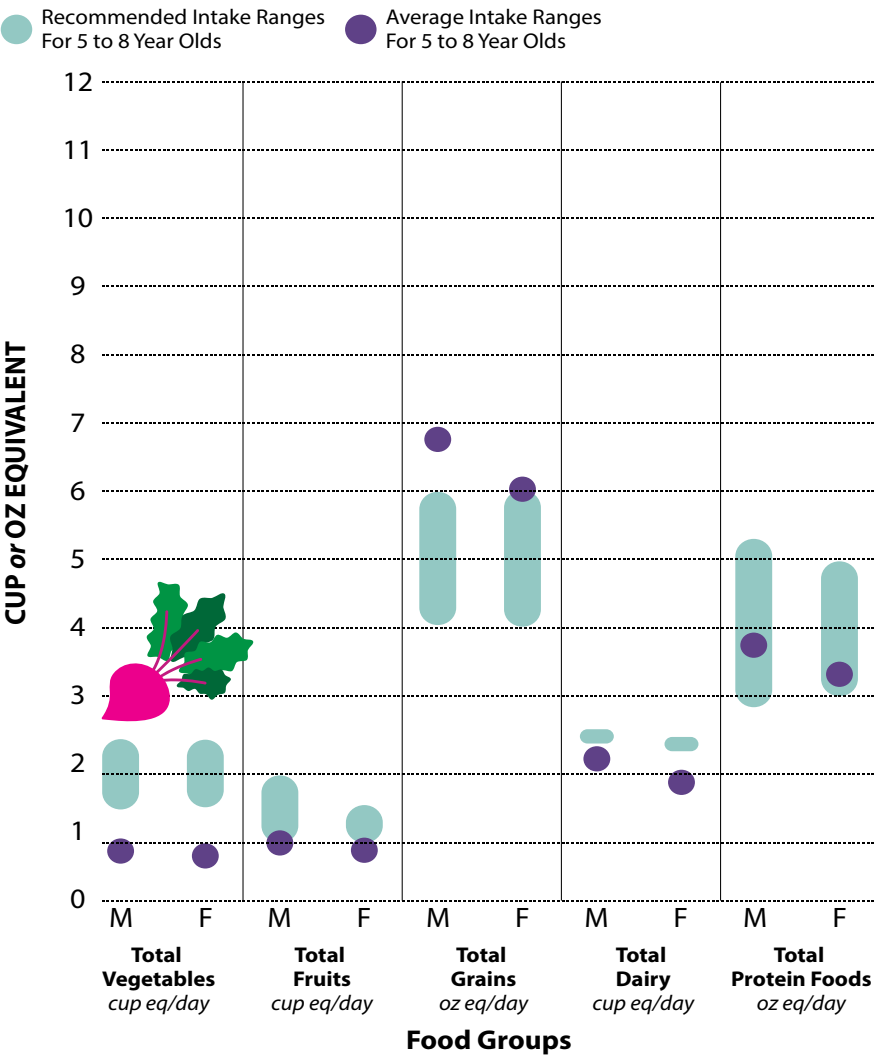
Nutrition for Body & Mind

Fuel for Learning  
& Powerful Play

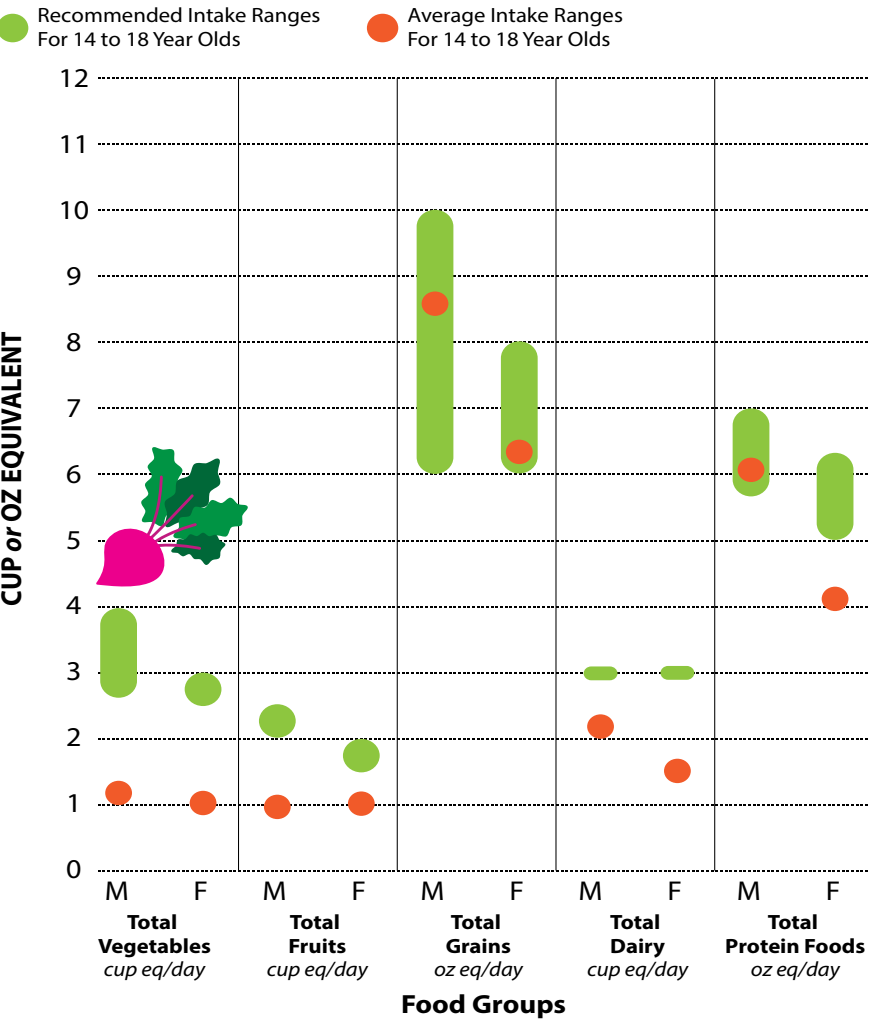
Current Intakes: Ages 9 Through 13



Current Intakes: Ages 5 Through 8



Current Intakes: Ages 14 Through 18



Beets have among the highest natural sugar content of all vegetables and are high in fiber.



# Credits

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Garden State on Your Plate is a K12 program that uses local produce, school cafeterias, campus lands, and student demographics to illustrate and amplify curriculum. The program, designed to elevate the everyday quality of school foods and to increase participation in the National School Lunch Program, was created in 2010 by the Princeton School Gardens Cooperative in partnership with Princeton Public Schools, and with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



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