

New York
RESIDENT



Beet It

October 16, 2007– Dining

Beets don't draw the eye with their round brownish roots, languishing between radish and turnip. But red beets are simple to prepare and take top billing on many of the city's best menus. — Sylvie Bigar

Austrian chef Kurt Gutenbrunner, who owns Wallsé in the West Village, Blaue Gans in Tribeca and oversees Café Sabarsky at the Neue Galerie Museum on upper Fifth Avenue, grew up in a small village on the banks of the Danube. "At boarding school," he said, "I had a lot of beets and I hated it." But now, he's changed his mind. "One of my favorite dishes is an appetizer of marinated beets I boil, peel and slice thinly. I marinate them in olive oil with fresh horseradish and the best balsamic vinegar, and serve them with a quenelle of fresh Quark cheese. To spruce things up, sprinkle black truffles on top." As a more sophisticated entrée, Gutenbrunner serves ginger candied beets with lobster in a beurre blanc but his interpretation of borscht – an Eastern European vegetable and beet soup – may be the most luxurious in town, with foie gras floating on a sea of duck consommé and beet juice.

"Make sure you're buying your beets from a green market or that they are grown locally," said chef Dan Barber of Blue Hill on Washington Place. "This is the best time of year to savor beets from the East Coast because as the temperature goes down at night, the starch in the beet turns even sweeter." The chef enjoys serving different varieties on the same plate because, as he explains, just like tomatoes, they vary in sweetness and nuances. "After they are cooked, while still warm, I marinate them overnight with crème fraîche and walnut oil, my favorite recipe," he said.

At the new Klee Brasserie on lower Ninth Avenue, chef Daniel Angerer prepares a char tartare with what he calls golden beet caviar. "For me, beets are a new vegetable and the ones I buy at the greenmarket are long, almost like sweet potatoes. We dice them raw and pickle them in brine to create a textural contrast between the richness of the arctic

char – a fish related to salmon and trout – and the lightness of the brining liquid.” For the brine, the chef uses a combination of water, rice vinegar, brown sugar, garlic, bay leaves, pink peppercorns, coriander, thyme and salt. Another more experimental use of beets is his dark chocolate and red beet sorbet. Beets are reduced to a syrupy consistency and then mixed with lemon juice and water to sweeten the extra-bitter chocolate for a creative and tangy dessert.

Chef Matthew Zappoli who oversees the kitchen at Zoë in Soho and the new Zoë Townhouse on East 62nd Street, uses beets “in all kinds of ways.” He roasts chioggia beets or shaves them raw to sprinkle on his house salad. “I also roast and purée them to mix in a vinaigrette with verjus and red wine vinegar. Uptown, I serve them with seared sea scallops and also use them in the sauce.” The menu includes a side of oven-roasted beets, a very popular dish at the restaurant. “I was surprised to see that people ordered them so often,” said Zappoli, “but in addition to their great nutritional value, they are delicious.”

Between his three restaurants, Cookshop, Provence, and Five Points, chef Marc Meyer is a busy man. Known for his dedication to seasonality and local ingredients, the chef works with beets at each eatery. At Cookshop, he serves a simple salad of beets marinated in Zinfandel and wine vinegar for two days. At Provence, his latest venture on MacDougal Street, he adds roasted beets with carrots and onions to a fall lamb daube, a Provençal stew. He also takes advantage of the variety of beets available now to create a mixed beet appetizer, served with ricotta tossed with orange and lemon zests and a variety of herbs including chervil, tarragon and parsley. He features white beets and field mâche with toasted walnuts on a simple salad at Five Points, but the beets are marinated for two days in zinfandel and wine vinegar.

“For home cooks, the biggest problem with beets is how much they stain,” said chef Marc Murphy who owns Landmarc in Tribeca, and the recently opened location at the Time Warner Center. “Do what the chefs do and use rubber gloves.” He advises to cook them simply on a cookie sheet and then dice them up. “At Landmarc, they are an integral part of the chopped salad, but I also do a goat cheese and asparagus terrine with diced beets. They are great with goat cheese.”

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Blaue Gans
139 Duane St.
212-571-8880

Café Sabarsky
1048 Fifth Ave.
212-288-0665

Blue Hill
75 Washington Pl.
212-539-1776

Klee Brasserie
200 Ninth Ave.
212-633-8033

Zoë
90 Prince St.
212-966-6722

Zoë Townhouse
135 E. 62nd St.
212-752-6000

Cookshop
156 Tenth Ave.
212-924-4440

Provence
38 MacDougal St.
212-475-7500

Five Points
31 Great Jones St.
212-253-5700

Landmarc
179 West Broadway
212-343-3883

Landmarc/Time Warner Center
10 Columbus Circle
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