



*As the old song goes, 'I'll be true to you, if you'll be true to me.' I have had a lifelong love affair with this blushing bride. I like her boiled, roasted,*

*pickled and her young leaves are excellent in salads.*

I have lived for over forty years by the sea in the New Forest in Hampshire. Along the shoreline, just above the high springtide mark, you will find a line of bright green luxuriant growth each spring; if you look closely you will see that the leaf stems are pinkish purple. The young leaves are tender, if a bit bitter, and the cook-up just like spinach. It is wild sea-beet, the ancestor of

beetroot and probably spinach too.

Beetroot can, of course, be eaten pickled as an essential component of an English summer picnic of cold ham, potato salad, buttery lettuce leaves, spring onions, ripe tomatoes, radishes and if you must, a scotch egg.

IN PRAISE OF

# 01 BEEETS



## **Served suggestions:**

*Whether you roast it, blend it or juice it like the Olympians do, this purple lends its earthy, rich and sweet flavour and vibrant colour beautifully to a variety of both sweet and savoury dishes. Steam it for salads, blitz it for dips, or pair it with fennel, citrus and nuts which all work as beautifully as its usual partner, goat's cheese*

Nowadays, I make a homemade aioli with crushed raw garlic added to mayonnaise in which to dip sticks of carrot and celery; inspired by the classic dish as served in Le Colombe d'Or in St Paul de Vence. Some people wash it down with a beer but I, being more refined, prefer a chilled glass of chardonnay.

Nowadays, you can buy a fresh beetroot juice in a juice bar or juice it yourself at home with a NutriBullet. The best supermarkets sell beetroot crisps, better for you than the greasy potato variety and even more scrumptious. Try making them at home if you have a deep fryer or better still and air-fryer that uses much less oil.

I always try and include beetroot with my Sunday roast. Just pop them in the hot fat with the roast potatoes and remember to leave the taproot – its traditional and looks good on the plate. Beetroot takes a bit longer to roast than your spuds but it's worth the wait. They should be tender yet firm and just starting to look a bit wizened on the outside.

Young trendy chefs have taken to serving beetroot raw in salads shaved transparently thin with a sharp mandolin. It curls nicely to decorate a salad plate.

Last but by no means least we mustn't forget the Poles and their famous beetroot soup, borsch. Serve it cold with a swirl of crème fraîche and a sprig of fresh basil – say no more, perfection.