

No one expects beet soup to possess a touch of magic. But this kettle boasts of sorcery with its rich, compelling flavors and tempting appearance. While most beet soups are a dull shade of burgundy, this one is almost alive with its brilliant magenta color. Prepare the soup a day ahead, and the flavors are even better.

For a dazzling presentation, bring the soup to the table in a tureen along with some dill weed for extra garnish, and serve it in white or ivory-colored bowls.

WINTER RHAPSODY SOUP

3 to 4 medium beets, unpeeled, about 2 lbs.(1 kilo), tops removed,
3 C. (720 ml) water
3 large Russet potatoes, about 1 1/2 lbs.(680 g), scrubbed and cut into large chunks*
3 1/2 C. (840 ml) water
1/4 t. salt
2 large onions, peeled and cut into eighths
1 lb. (450 g) carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch chunks
1/4 C. (60 ml) water
1/2 C. (120 ml) water
Juice of 1 to 2 lemons
1/4 bunch fresh dill, chopped, or 1 t. dried dill weed
1 t. salt or to taste
1/8 t. freshly ground black pepper
2 T. finely chopped fresh parsley

1. Wash beets thoroughly, cut in half, and put them into a 4-quart (4 liter) saucepan with the 3 cups (720 ml) water. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Turn heat down to medium and simmer about 20 to 25 minutes or until fork tender. When cool enough to handle, use fingers to rub off the peels.
2. Combine potatoes, water, and salt in a 2-quart (2 liter) saucepan, cover, and bring to a boil over high heat. Turn heat down to medium, and cook until fork tender, about 6 to 10 minutes.
3. Put onions and carrots into food processor and pulse chop until finely diced. Transfer to a large skillet or wok and add water. Cook over high heat, stirring frequently, until just tender, about 5 to 6 minutes.
4. Have a large stockpot ready. Transfer cooked beets and all their liquid to food processor or blender and puree until smooth. Turn out into stockpot. Puree potatoes and their liquid; add to stockpot.
5. Puree cooked carrots and onions in 1/2 C. (120 ml) water. Reserve 3/4 cup (180 ml) of pureed carrot mixture for garnish, and add the rest to the stockpot.
6. Add lemon juice and seasonings to taste, and simmer about 5 to 10 minutes to blend flavors. Just before serving, use a spoonful of the reserved carrot puree to garnish the center of each bowl, and sprinkle with a smattering of dill or chopped parsley. Serves 8.

*I specify Russet potatoes because they have the perfect texture for this soup.

NOTE: If soup is too thick, thin to desired consistency with water and adjust salt and lemon seasonings.

