



# Homemade Vinegar & Sugar Beets

**[Marilyn]** I've been thinking about people being able to make vinegar. We've talked about it quite a bit on the Sustainability thread, but has it been brought up on Health and Wellness? And using vinegar as a cleaning solution? With the local fruit people have available. Having enough sugar might be a challenge.

**[Mick]** No, we haven't really talked about vinegar on H&W; but you raise a great point. Sugar would be a challenge. But sugar beets are massively high in sugar, are easy to grow and process, and can be raised in containers. In a pinch, a few slices or cubes of sugar beet (or better yet, sugar beet powder) could be added to the local fruit in order to provide the sugar content for the vinegar-making.

**[Marilyn]** I've got to get me some sugar beet seeds.

**[Mick]** As far as sugar beet seeds, you can get them from Richo Cech at Strictly Medicinal Seeds; and also from Pinetree Garden Seeds. Urban Farmer Seeds is a third option, and they have the best prices if you want to buy sugar-beet seeds in bulk. Also, sugar-beet greens are just as good as the greens from regular beets; and sugar-beet molasses will keep for over a decade if stored well (I have some in an unsealed jar in my cupboard that I made in I think 2012).

**[Marilyn]** Ok, I'll bite, sugar beet molasses? Why and how?

**[Mick]** Haha! Why beet-sugar molasses? Because it's a fairly simple way to obtain a very concentrated (and thus efficiently stored) sweetener that is shelf-stable pert near forever; and this sweetener comes from a renewable resource that's way easier and cheaper than keeping bees. Plus, beet molasses is extremely high in iron (for those who might be anemic) and in B-vitamins (which everybody needs). I'll get to the "how" in a second; but I want to mention that another possible option for using sugar beets as a sweetener would be to initially root-cellar them; and then throughout the winter, as one had time, one could dehydrate them either in an electric dehydrator or on trays near (or on) one's woodstove. They could be diced, sliced, or shredded for the dehydrator; and if desired, they could be powdered after they dried. It would be interesting to try substituting sugar-beet powder for white sugar in recipes. I've never done this, but it's something that I've been thinking about doing for a long time.

So, the "how" of beet molasses: scrub all the dirt off of the beets, peel them, and shred them. Fill a big pot 1/3-to-1/2 full of shreds, and then fill the rest of the pot with water. Cover the pot, bring to a boil, and then simmer (still covered) for a couple of hours. Remove from heat and allow to cool (keeping it covered). It doesn't have to cool to room temperature; it just has to cool enough so that

## Homemade Vinegar & Sugar Beets *(continued)*

it won't scald you if you get it on your skin. Once it is sufficiently cooled, pour the cooking liquid into another pot. Then if you have a fruit press or tincture press, use it to extract all the liquid you can from the cooked beets. Otherwise, put the cooked beets in some cheesecloth or a linen towel and squeeze out as much liquid as possible by hand. Once you've gotten as much liquid as you can, bring all the liquid back to a boil; then cook it at the lowest heat possible, uncovered, until it is dark and thick and looks like molasses. If you have a woodburning stove, you can put your pot on a corner where it's not super hot, and let it cook down. Stir occasionally; and as it thickens, stir more and more often. Make sure that it doesn't stick and burn. If any foam rises to the top of the pot, skim it off periodically. When the molasses is sufficiently thick, pour it into clean and sterilized jars (you can sterilize them by boiling, but I sterilize my jars in the oven instead). If the molasses is hot, then make sure the jars are hot; if the molasses is cool, then let the jars cool before putting the molasses in them. Put tight-fitting lids on the jars. The lids don't need to seal; there's so much sugar and so little water in the molasses that it will keep just fine on a shelf for a very long time. As I mentioned, I have an unsealed jar in my cupboard from a batch of molasses that I made I think 11 years ago.

**[Lisa]** Yes! I did that research a couple years back as well trying to find a sugar source I could grow here as well. The Willamette Valley grows lots of sugar beets also.

<https://bakerpedia.com/ingredients/beet-sugar/>

And here's a link for how to make brown sugar out of sugar beets:

<https://www.instructables.com/Making-Sugar-From-Sugar-Beets/>

**[Marilyn]** When we look at all of the things we rely upon that are shipped in, it is staggering. Finding alternatives now will help people not panic. Back to vinegar, here's a link to Kris' short video on making scrap vinegar:

<https://corac.co/2023/09/21/how-to-make-scrap-vinegar/>

And here's a longer video from YouTube, about making fruit vinegar: `

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=depySASTPrw>

