

Beet Kvass

Earthy, salty, and as sweet or sour as you like, this jewel-toned lacto-fermented beverage is full of probiotic goodness. It's easy and affordable to brew right on your kitchen counter as long as you have a large jar, beets, and salt. You can drink it straight-up as a daily tonic or cook with it like vinegar; it's great in salad dressings and brightens up soups. Try it as a dazzling cocktail mixer that provides a boost without added sugar.

Ingredients

2 medium or 1 large beet, (about 10-12 oz)
1 teaspoon sea salt (non-iodized)
Approximately 3 cups of non-chlorinated water
A clean 4-cup jar

Optional:

Non-pasteurized "starter" to kickstart fermentation: brine from non-pasteurized pickles or kraut; whey (the liquid that sits atop unsweetened plain yogurt); kefir or kombucha. Aromatics like fresh slices of ginger or turmeric, a slice of apple or orange, and spices like star anise, a stick of cinnamon, or caraway seed.

Directions

Cut off the greens, if still attached and save for another meal.
Scrub beets well but don't peel. Roughly dice into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch pieces.
Place beets into a clean quart jar. Add aromatics if desired.
Add the salt and a tablespoon of starter culture if using, then fill the jar with water leaving a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch headspace at the top.
Cover with a paper towel or clean cheesecloth and then secure with a rubber band. This allows the gases to escape but keeps out dust and bugs.
Allow to ferment at room temperature for 3-5 days, checking daily. Skim off any natural molds or foam that might collect on the surface, but otherwise do not disturb.
When it starts to bubble and emits a slight earthy smell, taste a small sample. It will become tangier and more acidic as it sits. When it tastes how you like it, pour the liquid into a clean glass bottle, seal, and refrigerate for 2-3 more days to let the flavors develop.
The still-firm beets are great to eat: you can make beet soups, grate them into salads, or even quick pickle them.
The kvass will keep in the refrigerator for a month or longer, depending upon how acidic it is: less acidic concoctions should be used up faster.

