

GOLDEN BEET AND SUNFLOWER SEED SALAD

To maximize the flavor of this salad, toss the beets with the dressing while they're still warm, so they'll absorb more of it. Sunflower seeds turn rancid fairly quickly, so it's important to purchase them from a place with high turnover, such as a natural foods store.

Active time: 20 min Start to finish: 1 1/4 hr

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— ingredients —

2 1/2 lb medium golden beets (with greens)
1/2 cup raw (not roasted) sunflower seeds (2 1/4 oz)
2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot
2 1/2 tablespoons cider vinegar
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon sugar
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
5 oz spring mix lettuces

— preparation —

Put oven racks in lower third and middle of oven and preheat oven to 425°F.
Trim beet greens, leaving 1 inch of stems attached. Tightly wrap beets together in double layers of foil to make packages (2 or 3 per package) and roast in middle of oven until tender, 40 to 45 minutes.
Unwrap beets and cool slightly.

While beets roast, toast sunflower seeds in a pie plate or a small baking pan in lower third of oven, shaking occasionally, until seeds are golden, about 10 minutes.

Whisk together shallot, vinegar, salt, pepper, and sugar in a small bowl, then add oil in a stream, whisking.

When beets are cool enough to handle, slip off and discard skins. Cut beets lengthwise into 1/4-inch-thick slices and gently toss with 3 tablespoons vinaigrette in a bowl.

Toss sunflower sprouts and half of sunflower seeds with remaining vinaigrette in another bowl. Arrange beets on 6 salad plates and top with dressed sprouts. Sprinkle salads with remaining sunflower seeds.

Cooks' note:

Beets can be roasted, sliced, and dressed 1 day ahead and chilled, covered.

Makes 6 servings.