Drinks

Beet Kvass

Raw beet cubes submerged in salt brine, left to ferment in a dark corner for a week — the result is a deeply ruby, probiotic tonic with an earthy sweetness and a clean lactic tang that borscht cooks have been sipping for generations.

Time 10095 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Raw beets (washed, unpeeled, cubed 2cm)
- ☐ 200 parts Non-chlorinated water (filtered or boiled and cooled)
- ☐ 4 parts Non-iodized salt (sea salt or kosher)
- ☐ 4 parts Garlic cloves (peeled, optional)
- ☐ 2 parts Caraway seeds (optional)

Let's make it.

01 Dissolve the salt in the water, stirring until completely clear with no visible crystals. Non-iodized salt is essential — iodine kills the beneficial lactobacillus bacteria that drive the fermentation. Non-chlorinated water matters equally: tap water with chlorine will inhibit fermentation. Use filtered water, or boil tap water and cool it completely before use. The brine concentration here (approximately 2% by weight) is below pickling strength, allowing fermentation rather than simply preservation.

02 Cube the unpeeled beets into roughly 2cm pieces — peeling is not necessary and the skin carries wild yeast and bacteria that help kickstart fermentation. Pack the beet cubes tightly into a clean, wide-mouth jar along with the garlic and caraway seeds if using. Pour the salt brine over to completely submerge all the beets. The beets must remain below the brine surface at all times. If they float, weigh them down with a small jar of water or a clean stone. Leave 3–4cm of headspace for fermentation activity.

03 Cover the jar with a cloth secured with a rubber band, or a loose lid — it should allow gas to escape but keep contaminants out. Store at room temperature (18–22°C) out of direct light for 5–7 days. After 24 hours you should see small bubbles at the brine surface. Skim any white foam that forms on top — this is harmless kahm yeast, not mold. By day 5, the brine will be a vivid, deep ruby-red and the flavor will be earthy, sweet, and pleasantly sour. Strain into bottles and refrigerate. The cold halts fermentation and preserves the tonic for 4–6 weeks.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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