



Clockwise from top: With less than 10 minutes assembly time, this arugula salad with beef and beets offers flavors ranging from savory to tangy, a variety of mouth-pleasing textures and a satisfying and healthy meal. Salt tenderizing an inexpensive cut of beef makes the dish easy on the budget. Leoci's Sweet Baby Beets bring sweetness and tanginess to the salad.

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Where's the beet?

This arugula salad is an easy and affordable mid-week dinner with an inexpensive cut of beef, tangy pickled beets and balsamic vinaigrette.

BY TIM A. RUTHERFORD

A light supper is in order several nights a week at my house. We both work long days and just don't want a heavy dinner or a lot of carbs late at night.

This salad incorporates lots of nice, light acids -- from the balsamic vinaigrette to the pickled beets to the Feta cheese.

I peppered the steak heavily prior to grilling, so it had nice savory flavors going on -- then added an additional texture and more layers of flavor with seasoned croutons.

I used an off-the-shelf pickled beet. Mine was Leoci's Sweet Baby Beets, a product created by Savannah

restaurateur and chef Roberto Leoci. The small beets are tender, mildly sweet and gently pickled. The beets are great on this salad -- and are pretty tasty plucked right from the jar.

The only prep time was tenderizing the steak -- then the entire meal takes about 10 minutes to assemble. Arugula and salad toppings can be assembled while the steak grills.

Pairing wines include a wide range of choices, from Pinot Grigio to a savory Viognier to fruit forward reds like a Spanish Rioja or inexpensive California Cabernet. Sauvignon. I had my salad with Smoking Loon Merlot.

Salt tenderizing beef

My beef for this salad was a very inexpensive beef shoulder steak (5.99/lb) that cost just over four bucks.

I used a salting method to tenderize the beef. How does that work?

The salt pulls moisture from the steak -- so cooking is a lot less like steaming a tough cut, which will make the meat even tougher.

In the process, the salt acts against the beef cells to relax the naturally uptight proteins -- and make your steak buttery tender.

Here's how:

1. Generously salt both sides of the steak with kosher salt.
2. Allow the steaks to sit on a plate for one hour per inch of thickness.
3. Rinse away all salt, then pat steaks very dry with paper towels.
4. Season with pepper, if you choose, then grill to your preferred level of doneness. In this case, I used a grill pan, seared the steaks on each side for about two minutes -- to about medium rare.

Will this make your steaks too salty? No. While some osmosis occurs, pulling salt into the steak, by following the recipe you actually get a nicely seasoned steak

Tip: Even if you're not trying to tenderize a steak, salting in advance and following this method is a great insider technique to create truly flavorful steaks. Salting just before grilling actually pulls out water as you're cooking -- which creates a steaming effect.

Arugula Salad with Beef & Beets

(serves two)

4 cups baby arugula	Leoci's Sweet Baby Beets
12 oz. beef shoulder steak	Feta cheese, crumbled
Balsamic vinaigrette	Seasoned croutons

Assemble chilled arugula on salad plates.

Tenderize beef (see method), and grill indoors or out to preferred doneness. Let steak sit for 5 minutes, then slice across the grain into narrow strips.

Arrange strips atop arugula, then drizzle with balsamic vinaigrette.

Scatter beets to taste on top of salad, sprinkle on Feta cheese to taste and add croutons.

To order Leoci's Sweet Baby Beets, visit his website, www.leocis.com