



Brussels Sprouts!

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Brussels sprouts were named after the city where they were grown as early as the 13th century — Brussels, Belgium. This vegetable belongs to the Brassicaceae family along with its larger counterpart, cabbage.

Growing

Brussels sprouts' most bountiful period of growth in the Midwest runs from early summer through late fall, depending on location and climate. In fact, Brussels sprouts grown during cooler months have a sweeter taste due to a survival tactic in which the plant will convert its starch to sugar to prevent freezing.

From planting to harvesting, Brussels sprouts take three to four months to grow. Sow seeds indoors in May and transplant them into the garden three to four weeks later. Place plants 18 to 24 inches apart in rows spaced 30 to 36 inches apart. Brussels sprouts prefer a sunny location with fertile, well-drained soil. The soil should be watered regularly to produce delicious sprouts.

Harvesting

Harvest when the sprouts are bright green, firm and 1 to 2 inches in diameter. The lower sprouts will be ready earlier. To harvest a sprout, remove the leaf below it and snap or cut the sprout from the stalk. If a once-over harvest is preferred, pinch off the top 2 inches of the plant when the lower sprouts are 1 inch in diameter. A full stalk of sprouts will be ready to harvest one month later.

Frosts will provide a sweeter taste because plants convert their starches to sugar to protect themselves from freezing. Brussels sprouts can remain in the garden as long as temperatures stay above 20 degrees Fahrenheit. One stalk may produce 60 to 100 sprouts under good conditions.

Nutrition

One cup of Brussels sprouts contains 40 calories, 3 grams (g) of protein and 3 g of fiber. They are also good sources of vitamin C and vitamin K.

Storing

Store Brussels sprouts by placing them, unwashed and untrimmed, in a breathable bag or container in the refrigerator. Place them in a crisper drawer to keep them fresher for longer. They can be stored this way for up to two weeks; however, they provide the best flavor and texture when used within the first week after harvesting.

Preparation

Brussels sprouts are a healthy addition to many dishes and can be prepared by roasting or air-frying, or they can be eaten raw when shaved into a salad. Regardless of preparation method, Brussels sprouts should always be trimmed, rid of any wilted leaves and rinsed well to remove any dirt. If roasting or air-frying, cook just until fork-tender to avoid a bitter taste from overcooking.

If eating raw, shred or cut them into thin slices so they don't overpower bites. Brussels sprouts typically have a milder flavor profile, making them versatile in many dishes, but their taste is most commonly complemented with garlic, rich cheeses or an acidic dressing or glaze.

Preservation

Brussels sprouts maintain their best taste and texture when prepared and eaten fresh, but freezing them is a common preservation method. Start by trimming and removing any wilted leaves or hard bits and rinsing thoroughly. After this, place in boiling water for 3 to 5 minutes to blanch. Let the sprouts cool completely before placing them in an airtight container and storing in the freezer.



Recipes



Shaved Brussels Sprout Salad

- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, shaved
- ¼ cup green onions, chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil, canola oil or sunflower oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper, or to taste
- ¼ cup feta cheese
- ¼ cup dried cranberries

Preheat oven to 350 F and spread sunflower seeds on a sheet pan to roast until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Make sure to check frequently to prevent burning. The same results can be achieved by roasting them in a pan at medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes, or until golden brown and fragrant. Thoroughly rinse Brussels sprouts and trim off tough ends or wilted leaves. At the same time, also rinse green onions, chop and let dry. Thinly slice Brussels sprouts with a mandolin or knife and place in a medium bowl. Drizzle the shaved Brussels sprouts with oil and lemon juice. Add the black pepper before tossing. Add feta cheese, green onions, cranberries and roasted sunflower seeds into the shaved Brussels sprouts and toss until combined. Serve on a chilled plate.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 140 calories, 9 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 11 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber and 60 milligrams sodium.



Crispy Smashed Brussels Sprouts

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, canola oil or sunflower oil
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Preheat oven to 425 F. Rinse and trim the Brussels sprouts. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add the Brussels sprouts and cook for 8 to 10 minutes, or until fork-tender. Drain and immediately rinse under cold water to stop the cooking process. Once cooled, place the Brussels sprouts into a medium bowl along with oil, cayenne pepper, minced garlic and half of the Parmesan cheese. Mix until Brussels sprouts are evenly coated. Arrange Brussels sprouts evenly on a baking sheet, leaving 1 ½ to 2 inches apart. Smash the Brussels sprouts with a glass or jar, making sure to place a piece of parchment paper between the sprouts and jar. Sprinkle with the remaining Parmesan cheese and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until sprouts are crispy and cheese is golden brown.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 150 calories, 10 grams (g) fat, 7 g protein, 12 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber and 210 milligrams sodium.



Roasted Maple Dijon Brussels Sprouts

- 3 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, canola oil or sunflower oil
- 1-2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts

Preheat oven to 375 F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, whisk together maple syrup, Dijon mustard, oil, minced garlic, salt and pepper. Rinse Brussels sprouts thoroughly and trim any hard ends and wilted leaves. Cut Brussels sprouts in half lengthwise before tossing them in the dressing. Arrange Brussels sprouts on a sheet pan, cut side down, and roast for 30 to 35 minutes until tender.

Makes five servings. Each serving has 100 calories, 3 grams (g) fat, 3 g protein, 17 g carbohydrates, 3.5 g fiber and 225 milligrams sodium.

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