

Eat Brussels Sprouts!

Like Marmite, Brussels sprouts are a somewhat divisive food, although most people who claim to hate them have probably been scarred by encounters with horrible overcooked monstrosities in their formative years.

When prepared with a little care, sprouts are a wonderfully satisfying vegetable with a delicious, fresh, green flavour and just the right amount of crunch. They can be served simply as a side vegetable (perhaps with some chopped chestnuts or a sprinkling of sesame seeds), added to casseroles or sliced and stir-fried (try them with beef and oyster sauce).

HISTORY - Some sources trace sprouts back to ancient China whilst others claim they originated much later and were grown in the area around Brussels in the thirteenth century. It is known that they were not introduced to France and England until late in the eighteenth century.

Today they are eaten in N. America and Australia but remain a much more common sight on dining tables in N. Europe, and Britain in particular.

BIOLOGY - Brussels sprouts belong to the *Gemmifera* group of the cabbage family (*Brassica oleracea*). The sprouts grow as head buds around a central stem.

BUYING - Look for firm, compact sprouts with green unwithered leaves. The base end discolours quickly after harvesting and will often be slightly yellow-brown but should not be dark. Fresh sprouts have no odour or a delicate smell. Those sold on the stalk are likely to stay in better condition for longer. Choose small, evenly-sized sprouts for ease of cooking.

STORING - Sprouts should be kept cool at all times and eaten before the leaves discolour or they develop a strong smell.

COOKING - Scan the code below to view the recipe for '*Brussels sprouts with bacon, leek & caraway*' on the seasonal recipes blog.



or visit: qmulsustainability.wordpress.com/recipes