

Florida Food Fare

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Brussels Sprouts

Description: Brussels sprouts get their name from having been grown 400 years ago in the vicinity of Brussels, Belgium. As a commercial crop, it is produced in the United States, primarily in California and New York. A few sprouts are grown in Florida, mostly in backyard gardens. They resemble small heads of cabbage and belong to the cabbage family of cruciferous. The round green sprouts are about walnut size, from 3/4 to 2 inches across and are composed of tightly packed leaves.

Availability: Brussels sprouts require cool weather for best growth. Warm weather causes individual sprouts to be soft and open rather than solid and tightly packed. The best time to grow Brussels Sprouts in Florida is during the winter. When planted in October through December, there is sufficient cool weather in most areas of the state for fair results. Though they are available year round, the peak season in this area is November through January.

Nutritional Value: Brussels Sprouts are low in fat, sodium and calories. They are cholesterol free and a good source of fiber and folate. One cup, approximately 88 g, contains 37 calories, 3.3 g dietary fiber, 36.9 mg calcium, 342 mg potassium and 22 mg sodium. It also yields 74 mg vitamin C, 53.7 mcg folate, 777 IU vitamin A and 7.8 g carbohydrate.

Selection and Care: The smaller the Brussels sprouts are, the better the taste. They should be firm and green with no yellow or discolored leaves. Store covered in the refrigerator up to 5 days.

Preparation and Use: Brussels sprouts can be boiled, microwaved, steamed or sautéed. Very young tender sprouts can be eaten raw with dip. They can be combined with seasonings such as dill, mustard, lemon, ginger and garlic or added to soups and stews. Remove any yellow or wilted outer leaves and trim the stem ends but not quite flush with the bottoms or the outer leaves will fall off during cooking. Cut a shallow "X" in the base with a small knife to help heat penetrate the solid core so it cooks as quickly as the leaves.

Recipes:

Creamy Brussels Sprouts

1 quart brussels sprouts	1/2 cup grated low fat cheddar
1 teaspoon salt	cheese
2 cups medium white sauce (recipe below)	1/2 cup dry bread crumbs

Soak brussels sprouts in salt water for 20 minutes. Drain. Add water to partially cover. Cook until tender and drain. Place in a buttered baking dish and pour white sauce over top. Add crumbs and bake at 375 degrees F. for 20 to 25 minutes. Add grated cheese during last 5 minutes of cooking.

White Sauce:

2 tablespoons butter	1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons flour	1 cup 1 % milk

Melt butter in saucepan. Add flour and salt and stir until well blended. Slowly add milk, stirring constantly until a smooth sauce is formed.

Walnut Buttered Brussels Sprouts

2 pounds fresh brussels sprouts	1/3 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
2 cups water	1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
2 tablespoons butter	

Remove wilted leaves, trim stems. Bring sprouts and water to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer 8 to 10 minutes or until tender. Drain, rinse with cold water and drain well. In a pan, melt butter; add walnuts; cook and stir until butter browns. Stir in ginger. Add Brussels sprouts and saute until hot. Serves 8.

Marinated Brussels Sprouts

1 package (10 ounce) frozen brussels sprouts	1 clove garlic, minced
1 cup fat free Italian salad dressing	1/2 teaspoon dill weed
1 tablespoon finely chopped onion	

Cook sprouts as directed, drain. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over sprouts. Toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate.

Lemon Creamed Brussels Sprouts and Celery

4 ribs of celery, cut diagonally into 1/3 inch slices	1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons butter	2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon celery seed	1 1/2 pounds brussels sprouts trimmed,
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour	blanched, drained
1 cup 1 % milk	

In a heavy saucepan cook the celery in the butter, for 3 minutes, stirring until it begins to soften. Stir in the celery seeds and the flour and cook mixture for 3 minutes, stirring. Add the milk in a stream, whisking, and salt and pepper to taste. Simmer the sauce stirring until it is smooth and thickened. Stir in the lemon juice and zest and brussels sprouts. Simmer until sprouts are heated through. Serves 8.