

# Autumn Jewels

When cooked properly, Brussels sprouts have an earthy flavor and a pastry-like texture — and they fight disease like a champ.



By KAREN OLSON

ONCE UNIVERSALLY, and in some cases justifiably, despised, Brussels sprouts are finally getting their due. Open up any trendy restaurant menu, and you are almost guaranteed to see a plate of succulent, roasted Brussels sprouts offered

as a starter course. Unlike the bland, sogged-out sprouts of our youth, these tasty treats are often gussied up with salty bacon, sweet balsamic vinegar, or nutty Parmesan. When overcooked, Brussels sprouts stink of sulfur and turn to mush. When

fresh and prepared well, however, these healthy little brassicas — related to broccoli, cauliflower, and kale — are simply glorious. From sage green to slightly red, Brussels sprouts look like mini cabbages and are generally harvested in the fall. The smaller

the sprouts, the more tender they are — and they are even more tender and sweet after a frost. So enjoy the cooler weather with a warm dish of autumn jewels. In the next few pages, you'll find out just how easy they are to prepare.





## Quick & Easy

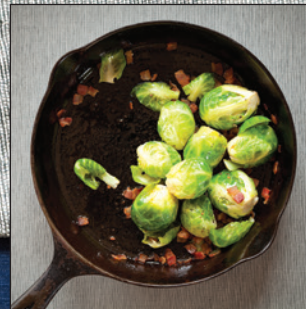
▲ **Raw:** Separate sprouts into individual leaves and toss with a light vinaigrette. The leaves are also great to use as the greens in warm or “wilted” salads. Shred raw sprouts to make a nice slaw or salad.



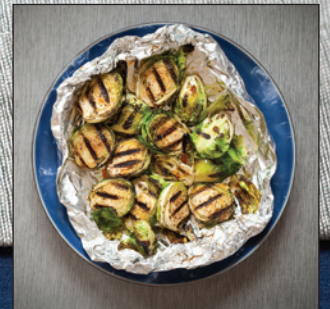
▲ **Roast:** Brussels sprouts can be roasted whole, halved, quartered, in individual leaves, or shredded. Try roasting them with coconut oil and cumin seeds for an Indian flavor, or with extra-virgin olive oil and then served with a sprinkle of lemon zest and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. Roasting time will vary depending on how the sprouts are cut, but, in general, you can roast in a 400- to 450-degree F oven, stirring occasionally, until the sprouts are caramelized.



▲ **Sauté:** Brussels sprouts can be sautéed for a quick side dish and are delicious when cooked with bacon or pancetta, or when sautéed in butter and tossed with chopped pecans or hazelnuts and a little orange or lemon zest.



▲ **Braise:** For more tender sprouts, sauté first and then add liquid, such as chicken stock or white wine, cover, and braise for about five to seven minutes. This technique melds the flavors in a soulful way.



▲ **Grill:** Toss halved sprouts with a little extra-virgin olive oil, salt, and pepper, then grill until just tender.



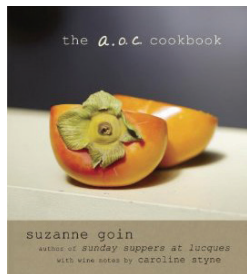


# The Puff Pastry of Vegetables

## “BRUSSELS SPROUTS

— Birds Eye frozen, thank you very much — were on my most-hated-vegetables list as a kid,” says chef, restaurateur, and cookbook author Suzanne Goin. “They were always overcooked, mushy, and maybe I had not yet discovered my love of their slight bitterness. I remember thinking, How can such a cute little cabbage be so gross?” Today, however, Goin — celebrated founder of the Los Angeles restaurants Lucques, A.O.C., Tavern, The Larder at Maple Drive, and The Larder at Burton Way — adores Brussels sprouts. Her most recent book, *The A.O.C. Cookbook* (Random House, 2013), includes one of her favorite recipes, Balsamic-Glazed Brussels Sprouts With Pancetta. She talked with us about her new favorite veggie.

“Brussels sprouts were on my most-hated-vegetables list as a kid.”



## Describe Brussels sprouts' flavor.

Slightly bitter, delightfully earthy. I probably appreciate the texture as much as the flavor. When properly prepared, they have a bit of crush from all those lovely layers — they're almost like the puff pastry of vegetables.

## What would you say to someone who is nervous about cooking them?

They are so easy. It's really all about getting a nice sear and then not overcooking them. It's funny, my business partner just said she has always been afraid to cook them, and the other day she sautéed them as [described] in my book and was surprised that they cooked that fast and on top of the stove without having to go in the oven.

## What are some common mistakes people make when cooking them?

Boiling or steaming them is a mistake. And overcooking them — this is when the mush factor comes in.

## What are your tips for successfully cooking Brussels sprouts?

Like so many foods, Brussels sprouts are better when they have a nice sear that brings out their sweeter notes and also creates a contrast between the soft interior and the crispy exterior. And seasoning is key. Just seasoning with salt and pepper works wonders. I love balsamic vinegar with them, too, because it counters the bitterness nicely.

## What other flavors do you love to pair with Brussels sprouts?

They actually work well with anything sweet, and combined with winter squash, chestnuts, parsnips, or carrots, as well as meats with sweet and gamy notes, such as pork and duck.

## What is your favorite way to eat Brussels sprouts?

My favorite way used to be sautéed with garlic, onion, and pancetta, and then pan-braised

with a splash of balsamic and veal stock, as in my *A.O.C. Cookbook* recipe. This season I've been just sautéing them with olive oil, shallots, garlic, and thyme, and finishing with a little balsamic. At A.O.C. we then toss them with sliced radicchio and long-cooked *cavolo nero* [also known as Tuscan or dinosaur kale] and stuff it all into a sandwich with burrata cheese.

## What do you make of the fact that Brussels sprouts, once universally despised, have become so trendy?

I always find it surprising that vegetables that have been around for thousands of years suddenly become trendy. It's really weird to me. I have been cooking Brussels sprouts for 20 years, so it has never been a trend to me. The downside of being trendy is that after a while, people think a vegetable is out of style and forget it's just a delicious vegetable. I like to remind people that being “cool” isn't the veggie's fault — look at poor kale, which is now considered “played out”!



## NUTRITIONAL KNOW-HOW

- Brussels sprouts, part of the *Brassica* family, contain a unique combination of cancer-fighting phytonutrients called glucosinates, making it an important food for chronic disease prevention.
- High in fiber, Brussels sprouts are great for the digestive tract. They help reduce cholesterol and may reduce the risk of colon cancer.
- The nutrients in Brussels sprouts offer a powerful mix of cardiovascular, detox, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory support.

## KITCHEN TRICKS

- Just before cooking, wash well under running water.
- When you clean and trim Brussels sprouts, the outer leaves will come off easily. If you're making a recipe for whole or halved sprouts, save these leaves for a salad.
- Brussels sprouts have thin leaves and a thick base. To help whole sprouts cook evenly, slice off the stem so you end up with a rounded head. Then cut an x in the thick base so heat can penetrate.

## Autumn Vegetable Gratin

**This creamy gratin is filled with colorful seasonal veggies. For a nice crunch, top with chopped toasted walnuts before serving.**

Makes six to eight servings

- 1 cup each peeled and cubed winter squash, parsnips, and celery root
- 3 cups trimmed and halved Brussels sprouts
- ½ yellow onion, very thinly sliced
- 1 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary
- ½ cup heavy cream, coconut milk, or unsweetened hemp-seed milk
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1 tsp. potato starch
- ¾ cup shredded Gruyère cheese, divided

Heat oven to 400 degrees F. Toss the vegetables with the olive oil, salt, and pepper, and roast in a 1½-quart roasting pan, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. Transfer the veggies to a gratin dish. While the vegetables roast, prepare the gratin sauce by heating the rosemary, cream, and broth together. Mix the potato starch with ¼ cup water until smooth and stir into the simmering cream and broth. Whisk over low heat until thickened. Stir in ½ cup of the cheese until melted and pour the sauce over the vegetables, stirring to coat. Sprinkle the gratin with the remaining cheese and bake until it's golden and bubbly, 20 to 25 minutes.



## Brussels Sprouts and Apple Salad

**This recipe is terrific with a variety of other dressings, including raspberry vinaigrette. To save on preparation time, you can thinly slice or shred the sprouts in a food processor instead of pulling apart the individual leaves.**

Makes four servings

- 1 cup diced apple
- Juice and zest of one lemon
- 1 cup thinly sliced celery (about three stalks)
- ¼ cup minced red onion
- 6 cups Brussels sprouts leaves, loosely packed
- ½ cup roasted pecans, chopped
- ½ cup sour cream or full-fat plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tbs. apple-cider vinegar
- ¼ cup crumbled blue cheese
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a large mixing bowl, toss the apples with the lemon juice and zest. Add the celery, onions, and Brussels sprouts leaves. Divide salad equally on four plates and sprinkle each with roasted pecans. Mix together the sour cream, apple-cider vinegar, blue cheese, and salt and pepper. Dress each salad and serve.





## SHOPPING AND STORAGE TIPS

- Select Brussels sprouts that are firm and compact, with a vivid green color and no yellowed or wilted leaves.
- Whenever possible, choose sprouts that are grown locally. In season, you can often purchase them still attached to a tall stem.
- Store unwashed Brussels sprouts in an airtight container for up to 10 days. After that, they start to get bitter quickly.
- If you want to freeze Brussels sprouts, blanch them first for three to five minutes. You can keep them in the freezer for up to a year. ❧

All recipes were created by **Betsy Nelson** (a.k.a. “That Food Girl”), a Minneapolis-based food stylist and recipe developer.



## Brussels Sprouts Kimchi With Peppers and Carrots

Traditionally made with cabbage or bok choy, the Korean dish kimchi is also a great vehicle for Brussels sprouts. This recipe takes a little time but is well worth the effort. Kimchi is wonderful served with meat, eggs, vegetables, and rice. (For a quicker kimchi recipe, see the online version of this article at [ELmag.com/brusselssprouts](http://ELmag.com/brusselssprouts).)

Makes 4 cups

- 4 tbs. kosher salt
- 4 cups water
- 1 pound quartered or halved Brussels sprouts
- 1½ tbs. Korean red chili flakes or crushed red chili flakes
- 1 tbs. fish sauce or anchovy sauce
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 tsp. finely grated ginger
- ½ cup julienned carrot
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced (green parts only)
- ¼ cup julienned red bell pepper

Dissolve the salt in the water; add the Brussels sprouts and soak for 45 minutes. Drain and rinse the sprouts. Meanwhile, mix the chili flakes, fish or anchovy sauce, sugar, garlic, and ginger together. Toss the mixture with the carrots, green onions, red peppers, and sprouts. Tightly pack the vegetables into a 1-quart canning jar or other container with a tight-fitting lid. Leave at room temperature for 24 hours, shaking the jar occasionally to distribute the marinade. Store in the refrigerator and consume within one month.

**Karen Olson** is a Minneapolis-based writer and a frequent contributor to *Experience Life*.



### WEB EXTRA!

For a quicker version of Brussels Sprouts Kimchi, as well as a Bacon-Braised Brussels Sprouts recipe, see the online version of this article at [ELmag.com/brusselssprouts](http://ELmag.com/brusselssprouts).

**NOTE:** Readers sometimes ask us why we don't publish calorie, carb, and fat counts with our recipes. We believe that if you're eating primarily whole, healthy foods (an array of sustainably raised vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, meats, fish, eggs, whole-kernel grains, and healthy fats and oils), you really don't need to stress about the numbers (which are often inaccurate or misleading anyway). We prefer to focus more on food quality and trust our bodies to tell us what we need. — Eds.