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### Sprouts of Health

Everyone always talks about fruit. It's the *fruit* of one's labors, a *fruitful* experience and it is the *fruit* of knowledge. Never is it the vegetable of knowledge, the broccoli of knowledge. Maybe it should be. Another fine vegetable that even gets left out of the vegetable groups is brussel sprouts. This strange looking vegetable is often overlooked when going down the grocery store aisle for its better, more beautiful, companions. Let's face it. Brussels sprouts are shunned by society. But why? Why indeed. By vegetable standards, brussels sprouts are odd, but that does not detract from its succulent existence. In America its health benefits are just starting to be realized. I believe that people are turned off to this royal vegetable because of poor preparation. Because with an attention to the cooking of the green specimen, a delectable result will occur. It is a vegetable that is revered in other parts of the world. But first people need to look beyond the look, not judge a vegetable by its appearance.

In movies of the 50's, the aliens who attack Earth are often shown as bulbous green heads of a vegetable nature standing in silver suits, next to what basically is a cardboard spacecraft. Aside from the lameness of these movies, the brussels sprout-like heads have done much to dissuade people from eating brussels sprouts. These images have become part of our collective "yuck!" That is too bad. Many consider brussels sprouts to be ugly. Not me. If you really look at the plant, it is pretty. A dark green and a look not unlike cabbage, a vegetable staple in European countries, it is usually sold off the stalk. If you go to a farmer's market, you can still buy it with

the stalk in tact. Perched atop a stalk stands the emerald beauty and its leaves are locked a glorious vegetable. Once you get over the Swamp Thing look, it really is a tasty side dish.

Leafy green vegetables are emerald as having such benefits as cancer fighting agents, in addition to the minerals and vitamins. Vitamin C is a major player in brussels sprouts and in this flu season, it is never too late to take on preventative care. The vitamin C in one serving of brussels sprouts is better than a vitamin tablet because it is naturally occurring and there for absorbed more easily by the body. Some nutritionists speculate that there is more vitamin C in brussels sprouts than that of an orange. But hey, what about that fiber. It's not just for old people anymore. Fiber is good for all; it cleans the body out. I won't get into specifics, but it is like Roto Roter. According to the food pyramid, you know, that triangle broken into sections that show how much of each food group you should eat. What? You don't remember that? It was the project between drugs and the week on human growth. The bottom of the pyramid (really, it is a triangle—pyramids are three dimensional) is for vegetables. You should have at least 3 servings of vegetables a day, and, guess what? That should include brussels sprouts Eat them. Yum. These leafy capsules of Jolly Green Goodness can add to any meal. The secret of their enjoyment is in how they are cooked.

Avoid the boil-in-water method. This is what has given brussels sprouts their negative history. This same thing has happened to spinach, but that is another whole topic. My favorite way to have these delectable edibles is fried in butter with coarse sea salt and pepper. It is a simple taste and worth the short prep time. The butter and salt tame the strong taste and bring out flavor. A second way, similar because it involves a salt additive, is with soy sauce. This gives the cabbage relative an Asian flavor that could easily go with rice or the more American, pot roast.

Parmesan cheese will add a sharp taste to the already sharp flavor thereby increasing the experience. In this last case, the sharp cabbage flavor is embraced, not hidden.

Veggies are usually eaten, reluctantly, for the health benefits while their fruit counterparts are put in cereals, juices, and candies. Mmmm, carrot flavored Starbursts. I don't think there is a market. However, we need to enjoy veggies for what they are and give them, including brussels sprouts, their time in the lime light, or should I say brussels sprout light? As part of the vegetable family, brussels sprouts should be eaten often for their nutritional attributes. Vegetables provide more nutrients raw than cooked. Some vegetable are tasty raw. Brussels sprouts are not. For these little guys—fry them up. The world of vegetables has received more press lately and as a result, we have dried vegetables in grocery stores where once only dried fruit reigned. There is even a children's animated series called *Veggie Tales*. Let's hear it for the new era.

Great vitamin content, a unique taste, and inexpensive, brussels sprouts provide a number of benefits when placed on your dinner table. In this day-and-age, Americans need to eat more vegetables like brussels sprouts. No. Potatoes. Don't. Count. And ketchup is not a vegetable (sorry president Regan). Take it from me, a brussels sprouts convert—they are a veritable vitamin vegetable with great taste. You can buy brussels sprouts at any grocer or at a farmers' market. The next time you are in social studies and you are discussing Brussels, don't think of the capital city of Belgium, think of Belgians sitting at a table eating a big bowl of beautiful Brussels sprouts—the vegetable of the new millennium.

