

Sprouts

Sprouts are both delicious and nutritious, and are very easy to grow in your kitchen for snacks, salads, and sandwiches. They only take a few days per batch, so let's learn a bit about them and grow some for ourselves!

Long a staple of Oriental and vegetarian diets, sprouts are nutritious, flavorful, and blend extremely well with all kinds of foods. They contain minerals, protein and many of the vitamins essential for a healthy life. Nutritionists have come to realize sprouts are one of the few complete foods.

Sprouts' health giving components originate in each bean, grain and seed's embryo. The future plant tissue contains nutrients to nourish the growth. They are used up only after the new plant takes root, feeding off minerals in the soil, or the chlorophyll of leaves. Therefore, sprouts must be harvested early and consumed before nutritional reserves are absorbed by the plants. Sprouts can be added to appetizers, salads, sandwiches, even desserts as they take on the flavor of the foods

in the mix, give a nice crunch, and some taste of their own.

There are three types of sprouts: seed-, grain- and bean.

- Alfalfa, clover, millet, radish and sesame

sprouts belong to the seed family, taste

sweet and are rich in vitamins C and K, and minerals.

- Barley, oat, rye and wheat sprouts are usually sweet and may be used in baking. All may be dried and ground, are rich in vitamin E and protein. These are the grain sprouts.

- Bean sprouts are divided into three classes;

tender beans, (including green lentils and mung beans), tough beans and the soy family. They also contain substantial amounts of calcium, phosphorus, and iron. Tender bean sprouts are a staple of almost all Oriental cuisines.; Kidney-, lima-, navy- and pinto bean sprouts, belong to the tough beans sprouts family and require intensive farming. The soy family



includes the soybean along with garden peas and garbanzo (chick) peas. All contain significant amounts of vitamins A, B complex, C and F, calcium, phosphorus, iron and lecithin.

Nuts with thick hulls can also yield sprouts, such as almond-, peanut- and pumpkin-seed sprouts, which possess a bitter-ish taste, but enhance the taste of other foods.

Sprouts grow effortlessly and can be harvested shortly after planting. After harvest, sprouts should be placed in plastic bags and refrigerated. A few drops of water per day, or a damp towel in the bag, will keep them fresh for up to ten days.

Growing Sprouts In A Jar:

1. Soak the seeds, grains, or beans in lukewarm water overnight in a wide-mouth glass jar. Remove any that are broken or damaged before you begin the sprouting process. (Sprouting increases the seed volume. 4 tablespoons will be sufficient for a quart size container.)
2. In the morning, pour off the water in the jar and rinse the seeds/beans thoroughly.
3. Place a piece of cheesecloth or muslin over the mouth of the jar. Use a rubber band to hold the material securely in place. This makes rinsing easier.
4. **To keep the sprouts constantly damp, repeat the rinsing 2-3 times a day. Remember to drain any excess water because the sprouts should not stand in water.**
5. Keep the jar away from the bright light for the first few days, but be sure there is air circulation.
6. When the seeds/beans begin to sprout, (usually about the fourth day) move the jar into indirect light to activate the chlorophyll and turn the sprouts green.

Harvesting and Storing the Sprouts

1. Grains should be harvested and eaten from when they are six days old until they are 4-5 inches tall.
2. To harvest, just take your kitchen scissors and cut what you need.
3. Sprouts from beans, peas, etc., are ready earlier and can be eaten when they are 3-6 days old, depending on the type of sprout. Sprouts, from grain sown in jars, are ready sooner and are edible even before they turn green.
4. If necessary, wash the sprouts thoroughly to remove the seed coat. Sprouts need to be stored in the refrigerator once they are ready to eat. Put the sprouts in tight sealing bags, and they will remain flavorful and crisp for one to two weeks. Rinsing the sprouts daily under cold water can extend their life.
5. Sprouts may be frozen by blanching them over steam for three minutes and then cooling them in ice water. Drain them and pack into freezer containers.

Try using your bean sprouts mixed with other veggies, in stir fries, or in soups, salads, and cole slaws. Sprouts like alfalfa sprouts are more delicate and best eaten raw in salads, wraps, and sandwiches. (Try them with peanut butter, or on a turkey sandwich.) They are also terrific in potato, chicken and tuna salads.

Sprouts are truly a super-food, packed with good things for healthy hearts and bodies, and a fun project for counter-top gardeners!

Growing Sprouts

