

Go-To Brussels Sprouts

Have 10 minutes? You can make the best Brussels sprouts that you've ever tasted.

≧ BY ANNIE PETITO ≦

It was a memorable kitchen moment: I had been experimenting with cooking Brussels sprouts on the stovetop when I produced a batch unlike any I'd ever had. Over intense, direct heat, the tiny cabbages developed a deeply caramelized crust that was unusually thick and dark, contributing a rich, nutty sweetness. With their attractively browned cut sides juxtaposed against bright green, tender-but-crisp rounded sides, these sprouts were impossible to resist.

Getting there hadn't been easy: Producing even browning from edge to edge and from sprout to sprout was a challenge, as was getting their dense interiors tender before the exteriors burned. I'd started by halving 1 pound of sprouts to create flat surfaces for browning. I heated a bit of oil in a skillet until smoking and then frantically arranged the sprouts cut sides down, later tossing them about. I had to remove the sprouts from the skillet when they started to burn in spots, but unfortunately, they were still crunchy. Adding a little water to a subsequent batch and covering the pan only made them too soft.

Since a hot skillet wasn't working, what about starting with a cold one? I set an oiled pan full of sprouts, cut sides down, over medium-high heat, covered, for 5 minutes. I then removed the lid and continued to cook the sprouts, without stirring, until they were just tender, which took only a few minutes more.

This was real progress. The cold start allowed the sprouts to heat slowly and release their moisture, so they steamed without additional liquid. Plus, I'd eliminated the hectic arrangement in a hot, oil-slicked skillet. That said, the sprouts' bottoms were somewhat dry, and a few burnt patches remained, especially in their very centers.

I'd been using just a small amount of oil. Would more oil help? Sure enough, a full 5 tablespoons worked wonders. As the sprouts heated, their tightly packed leaves separated and expelled moisture (a requirement for them to get hot enough to brown). This created space for oil to be trapped in the nooks and crannies and to spread from edge to edge for even contact with the skillet. Some oil was also absorbed by pores in the browned leaves rather than just sitting on the surface. The upshot? Gorgeously, evenly browned sprouts that weren't greasy. Rather, they took on a satisfying richness that sprouts typically lack.

Another advantage of this approach was that it was easier and less messy to arrange the sprouts in a dry skillet; I just drizzled the oil on top and it seeped underneath. And if any of the sprouts near the edges of the pan didn't brown as quickly as those in the center, I simply used tongs to reconfigure them.



For even seasoning, we finish the dish by stirring salt combined with lemon juice into the sprouts.

Here was that unforgettable moment: These sprouts boasted brilliant green rounded sides and crisp-tender interiors contrasted by nutty-sweet, crusty façades. To balance the sweetness, I stirred in lemon juice and sprinkled Pecorino Romano on top.

SKILLET-ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH LEMON AND PECORINO ROMANO

SERVES 4

Look for Brussels sprouts that are no more than 1½ inches in diameter. Parmesan cheese can be substituted for the Pecorino, if desired. Our recipes for Skillet-Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Chile, Peanuts, and Mint; with Gochujang and Sesame Seeds; and with Mustard and Brown Sugar are available for free for four months at CooksIllustrated.com/dec17.

- 1 pound small (1 to 1½ inches in diameter) Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup shredded Pecorino Romano cheese

1. Arrange Brussels sprouts in single layer, cut sides down, in 12-inch nonstick skillet. Drizzle oil evenly

over sprouts. Cover skillet, place over medium-high heat, and cook until sprouts are bright green and cut sides have started to brown, about 5 minutes.

2. Uncover and continue to cook until cut sides of sprouts are deeply and evenly browned and paring knife slides in with little to no resistance, 2 to 3 minutes longer, adjusting heat and moving sprouts as necessary to prevent them from overbrowning. While sprouts cook, combine lemon juice and ¼ teaspoon salt in small bowl.

3. Off heat, add lemon juice mixture to skillet and stir to evenly coat sprouts. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer sprouts to large plate, sprinkle with Pecorino, and serve.

SKILLET-ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH CIDER VINEGAR AND HONEY

Substitute 2 teaspoons cider vinegar, 2 teaspoons honey, and ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes for lemon juice and omit pepper and Pecorino.

SKILLET-ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH MAPLE SYRUP AND SMOKED ALMONDS

Omit pepper. Substitute 1 tablespoon maple syrup and 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar for lemon juice and ¼ cup smoked almonds, chopped fine, for Pecorino.

SKILLET-ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH POMEGRANATE AND PISTACHIOS

Substitute 1 tablespoon pomegranate molasses and ½ teaspoon ground cumin for lemon juice. Omit pepper. Substitute ¼ cup shelled pistachios, toasted and chopped fine, and 2 tablespoons pomegranate seeds for Pecorino.

Avoiding the Bull's-Eye

When there isn't enough oil in the skillet for even contact, the sprout browns (or even burns) only in the center instead of browning evenly across the cut side. Adding more oil solves the problem.



See: Sprouts Like No Others

A step-by-step video is available at CooksIllustrated.com/dec17

