

Warm Brussels Sprout Salads

Salads made with these hearty leaves can be a lot to chew on. We fixed that.

≧ BY LAN LAM ≦

Though most often sautéed or roasted, raw Brussels sprouts make a great salad green. My method has always been to slice the raw sprouts thin, dress them, and let them sit—steps that help tenderize the tough leaves and brighten their pungent flavor. Sprouts also take well to punchy dressings and bold additions like rich nuts and cheeses, tangy dried fruit, and even smoky, salty bacon.

A drawback to these slaw-like salads is that thin-slicing the sprouts is tedious—and they can literally be a lot to chew on. I had one idea that sounded faster: pulling the leaves from the stem whole instead of slicing them. But it only took a few minutes of plucking for me to realize that pulling apart the tightly packed leaves was actually more time-consuming than slicing. Scratch that.

In the end, I was able to streamline the shredding process with an assembly line approach: Rather than trimming, halving, and slicing the sprouts one by one, I worked through all the trimming before moving onto the halving, and so forth.

Even shredded, the sprouts were very dense to eat; I decided to incorporate a second leafy vegetable. A handful of bitter but more tender radicchio, shredded into fine strips, was just the thing to break up the salad's slaw-like density and add complexity.

Softening raw Brussels sprouts with a regular dressing takes about 30 minutes, but what if I dressed them with a warm vinaigrette? Surely the heat would wilt them faster, and a warm dressing would be a nice change.

Like regular vinaigrettes, warm ones are mixtures of fat and acid (usually in a 3:1 ratio). The difference is that the fat in warm vinaigrettes is heated, which meant that I had options other than oil. This seemed like a perfect opportunity to use my favorite Brussels sprouts pairing: bacon.

While I crisped a few chopped slices in a skillet, I used the microwave to lightly pickle some thinly sliced shallots in a mixture of red wine vinegar, whole-grain mustard, sugar, and salt. Then I whisked the shallot mixture into the bacon. Instead of dressing the greens in a bowl, I added them to the skillet, where they were warmed not just by the dressing but also by the pan's residual heat.

Now for those aforementioned bold additions—toasted almonds and shaved Parmesan for the bacon version and dried cranberries, toasted hazelnuts, and Manchego for another variation with brown butter. These salads were as complex as they were elegant and will play a starring role on my holiday table.



Shreds of tender radicchio lighten the salad's texture.

BRUSSELS SPROUT SALAD WITH WARM BACON VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 6

A food processor's slicing blade can be used to slice the Brussels sprouts, but the salad will be less tender. For tips on slicing them with a knife, see page 31. For our free recipe for Brussels Sprout Salad with Warm Mustard Vinaigrette, go to CooksIllustrated.com/dec15.

- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper
- 1 shallot, halved through root end and sliced thin crosswise
- 4 slices bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1½ pounds Brussels sprouts, trimmed, halved, and sliced thin
- 1½ cups finely shredded radicchio, long strands cut into bite-size lengths
- 2 ounces Parmesan, shaved into thin strips using vegetable peeler
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted

1. Whisk vinegar, mustard, sugar, and ¼ teaspoon salt together in bowl. Add shallot, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and microwave until steaming, 30 to 60 seconds. Stir briefly to submerge shallot. Cover

and let cool to room temperature, about 15 minutes.

2. Cook bacon in 12-inch skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, until crisp and well rendered, 6 to 8 minutes. Off heat, whisk in shallot mixture. Add Brussels sprouts and radicchio and toss with tongs until dressing is evenly distributed and sprouts darken slightly, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to serving bowl. Add Parmesan and almonds and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve immediately.

BRUSSELS SPROUT SALAD WITH WARM BROWN BUTTER VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 6

A food processor's slicing blade can be used to slice the Brussels sprouts, but the salad will be less tender.

- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper
- 1 shallot, halved through root end and sliced thin crosswise
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ⅓ cup hazelnuts, toasted, skinned, and chopped
- 1½ pounds Brussels sprouts, trimmed, halved, and sliced thin
- 1½ cups baby arugula, chopped
- 4 ounces Manchego cheese, shaved into thin strips using vegetable peeler

1. Whisk lemon juice, mustard, sugar, and ¼ teaspoon salt together in bowl. Add shallot and cranberries, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and microwave until steaming, 30 to 60 seconds. Stir briefly to submerge shallot and cranberries. Let cool to room temperature, about 15 minutes.

2. Melt butter in 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add hazelnuts and cook, stirring frequently, until butter is dark golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Off heat, whisk in shallot mixture. Add Brussels sprouts and arugula and toss with tongs until dressing is evenly distributed and sprouts darken slightly, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to serving bowl. Add Manchego and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve immediately.

Look: It's Easy

Video available free for 4 months at CooksIllustrated.com/dec15

