

# Brussels Sprouts

**Scientific Name:** *Brassica oleracea* var. *gemmifera*

**Irish Name:** Bachlóig Bhruiséile



The Brussels sprout is a green, leafy vegetable that belongs to the cabbage family—known as Brassicas. The plant produces small edible buds, about 2.5 cm across, which grow on a tall stalk. The stalk can reach almost 1m in tall varieties. These buds even look like miniature cabbages, with layers of densely packed leaves. Brussels Sprouts are typically green but there are also purple and red varieties.

The plants like a cool climate in which to grow. Depending on the variety, the seeds are sown in March and April and the plants can produce sprouts from October until March the following year. They like nutrient-rich and well-drained, moist soils and plenty of organic matter.

## What has it to do with Brussels?

Brussels sprouts originated in the Mediterranean. An earlier variety were grown by the Ancient Romans. Their name comes from how popular they became in the 16th century in Belgium.



## A 'Windy' Vegetable!

Like other members of the cabbage family, Brussels Sprouts produce sulphur to prevent animals from eating them. This is what gives Brussels Sprouts a slightly bitter taste. If overcooked these vegetables produce even more sulphur, which can make them taste stronger and less pleasant.

Our bodies naturally produce a mixture of gases to help digest our food and will make extra gases to try to deal with the sulphur. The mixture of all the gases can, to put it politely, cause smelly flatulence for some!



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The cabbage family to which Brussels sprouts belong obviously includes cabbage but also vegetables such as kale, broccoli and cauliflower.

## Nutritional value

Brussels sprouts are very good for you. They are high in vitamins, particularly Vitamins A and C and folic acid. They are also high in fibre.



## Christmas Dinner!

Different types of vegetable are plentiful in summer and autumn, but in winter it is a different story. One of the few vegetables that are ready to be picked in the cold months are Brussels sprouts. This is probably part of the reason that they have become associated with Christmas dinner. Love them or hate them, they feature on many dinner tables on the day!



Traditionally sprouts are boiled or steamed. If you cut a cross at the base of each sprout it will help the sprouts cook more evenly and help avoid overcooking. Sprouts can also be cut in half and stir-fried. To turn them into something more special, fried bacon pieces and nuts (such as almonds) can be tossed through them.