

Steve's Sprouting Tips

Elgin, IL - Traditional Nutrition Group

Selecting Seeds

Seeds must be fresh and sproutable – buy a small quantity and test them before you buy and store a lot of them. Be sure they sprout and taste good.

Do not use seeds that have been stored in open bins or paper bags; they likely will be too dry to sprout.

Use organic seeds because they have far less chance of being contaminated or otherwise altered. Additionally, the plants will have been grown and seeds harvested by like-minded folks.

Sprouting all seed-like foods before cooking brings out their maximum nutrition and flavor, such as beans, lentils, peas, rice, oats, and so on. Try this even if you don't plan to make sprouts to be eaten as-is.

Get seeds that have been hulled unless you want to spend a lot of time washing and rubbing them to get the hulls off.

Making Your Sprouts

You can make sprouts in almost any container that keeps them moist but not water logged. There is a wide variety of tools from cloth bags, jars, and specialized containers to electric sprouters. Use the simplest available tools for the job lest you become discouraged and give up on regular sprouting.

Ideally the container you sprout the seeds in can be stored in the refrigerator until they are all used.

Do not put them into direct sun light; they will burn up and die. They will green up under normal house lights. If they are completely dark they may not green up at all but will be OK to eat.

Put sprouting chores into your daily routine and you'll find that very little time is required to have a consistent supply on hand. For example, keep them near your kitchen sink, rinse them when you put away the dishes after dinner and again when you make your breakfast.

Put ready-to-eat sprouts into the refrigerator ASAP. They will continue to develop very slowly and should last for weeks – don't forget to rinse them.

Making sprouts during the winter months can make up for the lack of local, fresh salad greens and vegetables and it is very economical.

Storage/Survival Thoughts

You can make enough sprouts for a complete, dinner size salad from six to eight teaspoons of seeds.

You can store a lot of future-food in a very small space because the seeds are so small. (For example, 250 grams of alfalfa seeds can make 45 cups of sprouts!)

Like any other long-life, stored dry food you will need lots of water to use them and must keep them well sealed. I have some seeds that are over three years old. I stored them in regular jars and they sprout close to 100%.

Choosing Your Mix

Experiment with a wide variety of sprouts until you find the ones you like best. You'll find some that taste good and are easy to grow, while others may not taste good to you and be too much bother to make.

Some, like radishes and mustards, are very spicy and may too hot for some people. Use them in a mix.

The grass-like sprouts, like alfalfa and clover, are a bit too 'green' tasting for some palates. They are great for the bulk of a salad or mix and in soups/omelets when added at the last minute.

Sun flowers have a deep, smoky, taste and are good to bulk and spice up a mix.

I don't have a lot of experience with grain sprouts....

Resources

These are a few of the many suppliers.

Organic seeds and equipment

<http://www.mountainroseherbs.com/>

<http://www.sproutpeople.com/index.html>

<http://www.sprouthouse.com>

<http://www.wheatgrasskits.com>

<http://www.mvseeds.com>

<http://www.bulkfoods.com> – large quantities, some organic

<http://www.greensmoothie.com> – professional equipment for “restaurant quality” sprouts

<http://www.sprouting.com>

Ordinary seeds and equipment

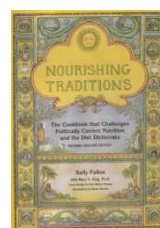
<http://www.parkseed.com> - search for sprouting seeds

<http://www.johnnyseeds.com> - search for sprouting seeds, some organic seeds, equipment

Sprouting Information

See pages 112 to 115 in “Nurishing Traditions”, by Sally Fallon.

Read the following pages....



Why Eat Sprouts? quoted from "The Wonders of Sprouting" by Lucie Desjarlais, RNC

"Lots of reasons! They carry plenty of vitamins, minerals, proteins, and enzymes, all necessary for the body to function optimally. In addition to providing the greatest amount of these nutrients, sprouts deliver them in a form that is easily digested and assimilated. In fact, they improve the efficiency of digestion. Sprouts are also deliciously fresh and colorful!

Sprouts are very inexpensive (even when organic), always fresh (they grow until you chew them) and have the potential to help solve hunger and malnutrition problems in our communities and in developing countries, because they are so rich in nutrients, affordable, and easy to transport before sprouting. Sprouts are precious in winter, when the quality of fresh fruits and vegetables is declining as their price increases."

"(Sprouts) supply the highest amount of vitamins, minerals, enzymes, etc. of any food per unit of calorie."

"... sprouts nourish and strengthen the whole body, including the vital immune system."

Why Sprout at Home?

Most of us in North America depend on fresh produce that is transported across half a continent. Though we may garden in the summer, winter stops all but the most dedicated, or most southern, gardeners. Home sprouting can supply delicious fresh food, without the environmental drawbacks of the Mega-farm produced fresh produce, and at a fraction of the cost. Sprouting at home takes only a few seconds a day and can produce a good part of your daily requirements of the nutrients you need from fresh produce. The hassles are minor, the costs are low, and the freshness is wonderful. If you can supply a jar, some screen or netting, and rinse the sprouts twice a day, you can grow delicious organic sprouts in 4 to 6 days.

Sproutable Seeds

Most seeds can be sprouted and eaten but avoid sprouting any seeds from plants that may have poisonous parts. Common seeds for sprouting include alfalfa, fenugreek, lentils, peas, radish, and red clover. Mung beans have been sprouted in Asia for thousands of years, but take more equipment and time than other seeds. Other less common seeds include cabbage, broccoli, garbanzos, mustard seed, and quinoa. Most grains can grow chlorophyll rich grass crops in soil, and grains without hulls can be used as short sprouts. Save garden seeds (radish is easy, just let them go to seed and harvest when dry and ripe). Caragana seeds make delicious sprouts. Spread a blanket or tarp by the bushes just before the pods pop open to catch the seeds.

Food Poisoning and Sprouts.

There have been several recent news stories regarding salmonella contamination in sprouts. These have been combined with warnings from the FDA and the CFIA that sprouts could be contaminated with food poisoning bacteria and advising the very old, the very young, and those with compromised immune systems to avoid raw sprouts.

I feel that the stories were far overblown because it made interesting news - the original "health food" might be bad for you.

What can you do to be extra safe?

Use certified organic seeds. Organic certification assures that seeds have been grown and handled in a manner that helps minimize possible sources of contamination. Manure used on organic fields, for example, must be composted for a long period. Composting has been shown to reduce or eliminate pathogens in manure. Organic farmers are also required to use rodent and bird proof storage for seeds destined for consumption. Organic sprouting seeds haven't been implicated in any outbreak of food poisoning.

Make sure that any seeds you buy have been handled as a food crop and not a farm planting seed crop. Seeds that have been in contact with animals or animal waste could be contaminated with salmonella or e-coli O157 H7, leading to food poisoning. Reputable sprouting seed suppliers test all lots of seeds for contamination.

Refrigerate finished sprouts. Treat sprouts and foods containing sprouts as you would any nutritious food - refrigerate until used.

If you collect your own garden seeds, make sure to dry them and store them in a clean and rodent free environment.

I feel that home grown sprouts, especially grown from certified organic seed, are far safer than a hamburger or potato salad at a picnic.

What You Need

1. A jar, 1 liter to 4 liter (1qt. to gallon) size, depending on your appetite for sprouts and size of your family.
2. A bowl of the right size and weight to prop up the jar.
3. Some screen or netting and a rubber band, either nylon tulle from a fabric shop or gray fiberglass screen from a hardware store, will work fine.
4. Fresh water.
5. Seeds with good germination, preferably grown organically. Avoid purchased garden seeds unless you know they aren't treated. Most natural food stores have the common sprouting seeds; if in doubt, ask if it's organic. If you know a farmer who grows the seeds you want without chemicals, buy in bulk. Most seeds keep for a year or more in a cool dry place.

Easy Sprouting Directions (for most small seeds)

1. **Soak** Put 1 to 4 TBS. seed in a wide mouth jar. Cover with mesh and secure with rubber band. Add water, swirl, and drain. Add 1 cup cool water and soak for 4 - 8 hrs.
2. **Rinse Twice** a day, refill jar with cool water, swirl, and drain. Invert jar and prop at angle in sink or bowl.

3. **Enjoy** In three to six days, when sprouts are 3 to 5cm (1 to 2") long, enjoy. Cover the jar with plastic and a rubber band, or transfer to a covered container, and refrigerate to store.

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Hints and Options for small seeds

You can grow alfalfa, red clover, radish, fenugreek, and other small seeds up to 4cm (1.5") long. A 250g bag of alfalfa seed can grow 45 cups of sprouts, or even more. Lentils and peas are best small, with sprouts .5 to 1cm(1/4 to 1/2") long. They get tougher with more growth. Miss a rinsing? Just continue normally if the sprouts appear alive and show no signs of mold. The sprouts should be fine. If you do see a spot of mold or rot, remove it with a good margin of healthy sprouts and discard. Don't mistake the fuzzy white root hairs of radish, canola, mustards, and other crucifers for mold. Be sure to taste sprouts as you go along; use them when you like them. To green up sprouts, leave them without a cover for a few hours in bright light, but not direct sunlight. Sprouts grow best between 18C and 25C (65F and 75F). Use luke-warm water for soaking and rinsing in cool room temperatures, and cold water in hot room temperatures. Drain the sprouts well before they go in the fridge. Rinse in the morning, cover and refrigerate in the afternoon. Mung beans (for Chinese bean sprouts) grow best in a drainable tray or basket. They like extra rinsing, and are best grown in complete darkness to prevent bitterness.

Soil Sprouting

Soil sprouting can be used to produce lettuce-like buckwheat greens or pea shoots, crunchy sunflower greens, or chlorophyll rich wheat or barley grass.

1. Fill pots, trays, or other containers (with drainage) 1/2 to 2/3 full of soil, compost, or potting mix. Ensure that the growing medium doesn't contain artificial fertilizers or chemicals.
2. Soak wheat 8 hr., buckwheat or sunflowers 12-18 hr., and spread on the soil surface just touching. Water the soil well and cover with plastic. Leave one side slightly loose for ventilation.
3. Mist or sprinkle daily; uncover after three days.
4. Put the container(s) in sunlight or bright light for 5-8 days, until the crop is 5-6" tall. Keep growing medium moist.
5. Cut as needed, but before plants become too old and tough.

Hints and Options for soil sprouting

Wheatgrass may be left for a smaller second crop. Buckwheat, peas and sunflowers cut only once. Spent soil and roots can be composted or dug into the garden. These crops can also be grown in baskets or tray type sprouters. Baskets are more trouble to clean and sanitize. Sunflowers grown in a perforated tray without soil really do well with wet feet. After 2 or three days, when roots have started to form, set the tray in a pan containing about .5cm (1/4") of water. Change or add water as needed until you have delicious 3" or 4 " tall shoots.

Serving Suggestions

- Grilled Cheese - liven up a grilled cheese sandwich with your favorite sprouts and a tomato slice.

- Tacos - Use sprouts instead of shredded lettuce in tacos.
- Hamburgers & Hot dogs - sprouts can replace lettuce in these kid's favorites.
- Sandwiches, Subs and Pitas - sprouts are a delicious addition to any of these.
- Salads - add fresh sprouts to just about any salad, or create your own sprout salad. (hint -- radish sprouts are great in coleslaw or potato salad, or anyplace you'd use radishes.
- Omelets - Add a half cup of sprouts to your omelets just before folding. Sprout mixes or alfalfa are great for this.
- Breads - a half cup of sprouts per loaf makes a tasty, nutritious addition to homemade breads. (Add with the liquids) The sprout nutrients also seem to help the yeast produce a higher loaf.
- Soups - a few sprouts added just before serving are great in many soups.
- Peanut butter sandwiches - believe it or not, I love sprouts in peanut butter sandwiches! Use your imagination.

A good basic 24 page booklet on sprouting is **The Wonders of Sprouting** - *Easy and practical steps to grow sprouts in your home*

Lucie Desjarlais, R.N.C. Nutritionist

Good directions with emphasis on nutrition and economy of home grown sprouts.

Available from Mumm's