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Brussels Sprouts Are For Kids!

By Susie Iventosch



For most of us, there's at least one vegetable we'd rather shove in our pocket than down our throat! My 'pocket' vegetable is definitely beets, but for my older brother it was broccoli. The way I heard it, when he was eight years old, he actually stuffed his serving of broccoli in his bathrobe pocket, rather than suffer the pain of actually eating it. My mom says it took her a few days, but she found it in the dirty clothes basket. The smell was a dead giveaway!

Another one of my least favorite vegetables has always been Brussels sprouts. So, when my friend Carol McDonald of Orinda said she was going to make them for dinner during our Mendocino getaway, I was leery. I told her, "I'll never eat Brussels sprouts ... ever!"

"Oh, yes you will!" she said. "The way I make them, even my kids love them!" And, she was right. I couldn't believe it, not only were they delicious, but I groveled for seconds!

Carol says her mom, Betty, used to make these and wouldn't let the kids have any.

"They were her favorite vegetable," Carol said. "She'd say, 'they're just for me' and finally we begged her to let us try them."

Now, Carol uses the same tactics on her family. Her husband refused to eat Brussels sprouts until he tried this recipe.

"And, it's so simple you can do it at the last minute," Carol added. "The longer you cook them, the better they are, because the leaves become crunchy like potato chips."

"My kids love the crunchy, crispy leaves that fall off the core as they bake."

Once I jumped on the Brussels-sprout bandwagon, I asked my friend Fran Miller of Moraga how she makes her Brussels sprouts.

"My best childhood friend Di Cardoza used to sauté Brussels sprouts in butter when we were kids and I just loved them like that," Fran recalled. "And my kids really like them this way, too. In fact, they won't eat them any other way."

Fran is a Brussels sprout lover and she came up with a delightful salad of Brussels sprouts and heart of palm in a simple vinaigrette dressing. Sometimes she adds pancetta and occasionally she adds cherry tomatoes, but she says the main thing is to sauté them in butter until they are crunchy and well-browned. Fran serves them warm on the salad.

Brussels sprouts are harvested in California from June through December, and, if you're desperate for these little cabbages during the winter and spring months, then head south to Baja, California, where the harvest lasts from January through June.

Carol's roasted Brussels Sprouts

2-3 dozen Brussels sprouts

2-3 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon pepper

*optional: pancetta, crumbled bacon, grated Parmesan, balsamic vinegar

Wash Brussels sprouts and cut in half length-wise. Place in large Ziploc baggie and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Drizzle olive oil over Brussels sprouts and seal baggie. Knead baggie to coat each with oil and seasoning. Remove Brussels sprouts from baggie and place on a baking sheet that's been prepared with cooking spray. Bake in 400-degree oven for 20 minutes. Allow any loose leaves to roast, too, as they become very crispy and resemble potato chips by the time they're cooked. The kids love these best!

Frannie's Brussels sprout-heart

of palm salad with vinaigrette

1 head butter lettuce

12-18 Brussels Sprouts, cut into quarters, lengthwise

1-2 tablespoons butter

1 teaspoon Lawry's garlic salt

½ teaspoon pepper

One 14.5-ounce can or jar of hearts of palm spears, sliced into ½-inch slices

¼ cup crumbled blue cheese

¼ cup shaved Parmesan cheese

¼ cup bacon crumbles

4-5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

Heat butter in medium frying pan. Add quartered Brussels sprouts and season with Lawry's garlic salt and pepper. Sprinkle bacon or pancetta bits over all. Cook over medium-high heat for approximately 5 minutes. Stir Brussels sprouts to turn and continue to cook over medium heat for an additional 10 minutes or so, until sprouts are beginning to brown.

Meanwhile, tear butter lettuce into bite-sized bits and place in salad bowl. Add blue cheese, Parmesan cheese and hearts of palm slices. When Brussels sprouts are cooked,

place in salad bowl and toss with olive oil and vinegar.

Serve at once.

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