

BEST BRUSSELS SPROUTS ‡

It is most likely true that there are only a handful of people in the world today who truly love Brussels sprouts, those little miniature cabbages that grow on stalks and are, au naturel, one of the least popular vegetables found in the American diet. They are called Brussels sprouts because they are (or were at name-giving time) very popular in Belgium, and because their real name, *Brassica Oleracea*, sounds too stodgy-scientific.

But they are an excellent source of vitamin C, vitamin D, folic acid and dietary fiber. And, since they also contain health-promoting glucosinolates that may help to prevent cancer, they have been awarded "super food" status. They have probably survived evolutionary extinction because of their benefit, not their flavor.

For many people they are a vegetable suffered mostly on holiday gatherings cooked to a recipe of "boil until ruined." I must say that I, too, prepared them in this manner, until enlightened.

My daughter Kat emailed me a recipe almost like the one below. She reported that she had prepared it thus and her husband Ken, who normally doesn't like Brussels sprouts at all, had two helpings and that she ate all the rest in one sitting!

I decided to try it, but didn't have Brussels sprouts in the frig at the time. But I did have broccoli. Big mistake! Edible, but only if you are too frugal to throw it out.

I then bought the requisite ingredients and cooked it according to instructions. I must agree that it is an outstanding way to prepare Brussels sprouts.

After this, I tried it with parsnips. It's ok, but I won't do it again.

The following recipe only differs from hers by my usual dietetic substitutions.

½ onion, chopped

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tbsp olive oil

1 lb Brussels sprouts, halved lengthwise

½ tsp dried thyme leaf

"salt" and pepper, to taste

½ cup nonfat half-and-half cream

3 tbsp asiago cheese, grated

3 tbsp more asiago cheese, grated

Sauté the onion and garlic in the oil for 3 minutes until the onion becomes translucent. Add in the sprouts, thyme, and seasonings and cook another 4 minutes. Add in the half-and-half and cook at high heat another 4 minutes until somewhat thickened. Remove from heat and fold in the first portion of the cheese. Put into a 1½ -quart baking pan, top with the remaining cheese, and bake, uncovered, at 350° F for 20 minutes, until the top starts to brown. Then cover and cook another 10 minutes.

Serves at least two. Maybe 4.