

Sprouts (Greens)

Interesting facts: Eating bean sprouts is one way of getting the most concentrated nutrients from a plant. Sprouts provide the body with the type of enzymes that make carbohydrates and proteins more digestible, maximizing the absorption of nutrients found in food.

Adzuki bean sprouts: These very sweet, lentil-shaped beans form fine, grass-like sprouts that have a nutty taste.

Alfalfa sprouts: Notable for their mild, nutty flavor and crunchy texture, these white sprouts have yellow to dark green leaves. They are too delicate to cook, but are excellent in salads or sandwiches.

Broccoli sprouts: These delicate green sprouts, with tiny white stems, have a pleasant, mildly spicy and refreshing taste that's reminiscent of radishes. Broccoli sprouts are a particularly concentrated source of sulforaphane, a substance that in test tubes decreases the growth of some cancer cells. While all cruciferous vegetables (including broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, and cauliflower) contain this substance, broccoli sprouts appear to be the richest source of it. Strangely enough, broccoli sprouts taste nothing like broccoli.

Clover sprouts: An alfalfa sprout look alike; most clover sprouts are produced from red clover. The tiny seeds resemble poppy seeds.

Daikon radish sprouts: These sprouts have silky stems, leafy tops, and a peppery-hot taste.

Mung bean sprouts: Larger and crunchier than alfalfa, with a blander flavor, these thick white sprouts are a staple in Asian dishes. Unlike more delicate sprouts, they hold up well in stir-fries. Be wary of canned mung bean sprouts, which are a poor substitute for fresh.

Soybean sprouts: More strongly flavored than Mung bean sprouts, soy sprouts are a rich source of protein. They do, however, contain small amounts of toxins that can be harmful when the sprouts are eaten in large quantities. To prevent complications, cook soybean sprouts for at least 5 minutes. If you consume them infrequently, there's no need to cook them.

Sunflower sprouts: Like alfalfa sprouts, sunflower sprouts are mild flavored but are sweeter and much crunchier.

How to select: Buy organic only. Avoid older than 3 days as they can grow fungus and become toxic.

How to clean and store: Good for 2-3 days in the refrigerator.

How to prepare and use: Raw in Salads or on sandwiches; some like Mung bean can be used in stir-fries.