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## AUTUMN MEANS BRUSSELS SPROUTS ARE ABUNDANT

Early autumn marks the arrival of chilly temperatures, brightly colored leaves, and the beginning of the Brussels sprouts season. Brussels sprouts are small, round members of the cabbage family that resemble their cabbage cousin in both taste and appearance. These walnut-sized compact heads grow in a tight spiral pattern on tall stalks. At the farmers market, you'll

usually find them still on their stalks to help maintain freshness but sometimes the sprouts will be pre-picked for you and sold in baskets. They have a dense texture and mild, but distinct, flavor. Brussels sprouts are a hardy, cold-tolerant crop so they can be enjoyed fresh right through the fall and winter.

It is widely believed that the Brussels sprout originated in Belgium in a region near its capital, hence its name, but its exact origin is not really known. It is a native plant of northern Europe and has been cultivated there for hundreds of years. It first made its way to North America with French settlers but only became popular in the United States in the twentieth century.

Like its relatives (cauliflower, broccoli, turnips), the Brussels sprout has a reputation for being very helpful in reducing the risk of some cancers. It contains nutrients that assist in activating the body's natural defense system which helps protect it from disease. These nutrients function as detoxifiers, fighting cancer-causing chemicals in the liver and potentially stopping certain cancers from developing. By making it more difficult for precancerous cells to develop, these hard-working nutrients are helpful in lowering the incidence of cancers such as breast, lung, colon, and ovarian.

In addition to its cancer-fighting properties, Brussels sprouts are packed with vitamin C. This vitamin is very helpful in supporting our immune system. It also helps with the creation of collagen, a protein that forms the substance for body structures (skin, connective tissue, cartilage, tendons, etc.). In fact, there is actually 50% more vitamin C in Brussels sprouts than in oranges! Also, the high

## 10 TIPS FOR SHOPPING AT YOUR LOCAL FARMERS MARKET

1. Bring reusable tote bags to carry your purchases. This reduces the amount of plastic bags that farmers have to use for sales. It helps keep the environment clean, reduces the use of petroleum needed to produce shopping bags and provides you with a convenient means to carry multiple purchases.
2. Bring a list with you so that you can be sure to get everything you need for your week's meals. BUT come with an open mind. You'll find some really enticing foods at the market and you'll want to be flexible with your shopping so that you can try new vegetables, take advantage of seasonal prices or buy that last quart of blueberries that will be out of season before the next market day.
3. Come early for the best selections. Farmers do their best to bring in enough product to satisfy all their customers. But Mother Nature has a say in this too. The best selection of products is early in the day before the crowds have reduced the supply. Buy that last quart of blueberries that will be out of season before the next market day.
4. Browse the market before you begin to make purchases. You'll want to know what is available so

fiber content of Brussels sprouts makes this vegetable a great choice for supporting our digestive health. Brussels sprouts are also high in folic acid. This B-vitamin is essential for proper DNA makeup during fetal development and for the ongoing production and maintenance of new cells, therefore playing an important role in fighting potential birth defects.

People (especially those of the child variety) are sometimes turned off by Brussels sprouts because of their distinct flavor and aroma but there are many tasty ways to prepare this little nutritional powerhouse, which may just give you a new appreciation for the deliciousness of this great fall/winter vegetable. Brussels sprouts can be grilled, braised, steamed, roasted, even microwaved—however you'd like them. They're great as a side dish or even as the main entrée!

When selecting your Brussels sprouts, be sure to choose those with firm, vivid green, compact heads. Avoid those with brown spots, blemishes, or wilted leaves as this is a sign that the sprouts aren't fresh and may even be damaged. But don't wait too long after buying your sprouts to eat them as they have a relatively short shelf life. To store, keep them unwashed and untrimmed in an air-tight container in the refrigerator for 4-5 days. However, Brussels sprouts can be frozen for up to a year. Just blanch, dry, and store them in an airtight freezer bag.

Now that there's a nip in the air and the trees are showing off their vibrant colors, why not enjoy one of the other great gifts that autumn brings? Head to your local farmers market for some fresh, tasty, nutritious Brussels sprouts!

For recipes using fresh, locally grown cabbage, visit [www.snaptomarket.com/recipes.php](http://www.snaptomarket.com/recipes.php). You'll also want to find markets near you, where you can purchase fresh, locally grown eggplant direct from farmers. For a complete list of markets in New York State, visit [www.nyfarmersmarket.com](http://www.nyfarmersmarket.com) and click on markets. Or for a list of markets that are equipped to accept food stamp benefits, visit [www.snaptomarket.com/locator.php](http://www.snaptomarket.com/locator.php). Each list is searchable by county, city, zip or market name.

you can decide what to buy. Look at each farmer's products in terms of both price and quality. When you browse the entire market before you begin to buy, you will be able to make informed and appropriate choices for you. Remember, base your purchasing decisions on quality, not on price alone.

**5.** Ask questions to help you choose the appropriate farmers and products. Farmers love to take about their products, whether it is vegetables, cheese or meats. They have a wealth of knowledge and take great pride in educating their customers about their products and their farms.

**6.** Stock up on produce while it is in season. You'll find produce at its peak of flavor. It will be available in abundance and you'll likely find the best prices. Plan to freeze, can or jam your purchase so you can enjoy them all year long.

**7.** Bring a cooler to help you keep your food purchases cool while you travel home. It's important to maintain cool temperatures, especially when purchasing meat, eggs, cheese or other dairy products. Food safety is important, do your part.

**8.** Dress comfortably. You will be outdoors and walking through the market. You'll have a more enjoyable experience if you wear appropriate attire and walking shoes.

**9.** Bring cash. Many markets and farmers do not have access to electronic card readers to take your debit or credit cards. With the growth in popularity of smartphone applications and card reader plug-ins, we expect to see this becoming increasingly popular. But for now, it's a cash business.

**10.** Visit [www.snaptomarket.com](http://www.snaptomarket.com) for a full list of the New York farmers markets that accept food stamp benefits.

