

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Capers and Lemony Browned Butter

I imagine Brussels sprouts were on the list of most hated vegetables for many of my generation growing up, but that's only because our mothers didn't know to splash the mini-cabbagey vegetables with olive oil and roast them in a hot oven until they were utterly tender and sweet. Gone are any traces of the slippery texture we associate with cabbage and, best of all, that strong sulfurous smell. In fact, these sprouts taste so good that you may have to restrain yourself from popping one after another into your mouth before they hit the table.

Roasted Brussels sprouts are wonderful on their own, and I often prepare them that way, but here's how I make them when I want a real show-stopper: As the sprouts roast, brown up a few tablespoons of butter in a skillet, add some capers and lemon, and toss this over the sprouts before serving. The contrast between the earthy vegetables and the sprightly lemon-caper dressing makes them irresistible.

Serve these alongside everything from roast beef to the Thanksgiving turkey. I've even been known to make supper out of a poached egg, a few slices of crisp bacon, and a generous serving of roasted sprouts. Thankfully, the recipe is easily doubled (or tripled), although if you roast more than 1□1/2 pounds, you will have to use 2 baking sheets in order to give the sprouts plenty of room to brown up during roasting. If you make these ahead, keep them at room temperature and add the browned butter at the last minute.

SERVES 4

Method: High heat

Roasting time: 20 to 25 minutes

1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 teaspoon mustard seeds, yellow or brown

2 tablespoons capers, drained

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice, plus more if needed

1 Heat the oven. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat to 425 degrees (400 degrees convection). If desired, line a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

2 Cut and season the Brussels sprouts. Depending on their size, cut the Brussels sprouts in halves or quarters; you want them to be small enough to be bite-sized. Place in a large bowl and toss with the olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Arrange the sprouts in a single layer on the baking sheet. Don't worry if some of the leaves fall off. Include these when roasting; they will crisp up, adding a nice crunch to the dish.

3 Roast. Slide the Brussels sprouts into the oven and roast, turning once or twice with a metal spatula to promote even cooking, until the sprouts are tender throughout and smaller bits or leaves that have fallen off are browned and crunchy, 20 to 25 minutes. Test for doneness by piercing a sprout with the tip of a paring knife, but to be sure, nab one off the baking sheet, let it cool slightly, and taste; it should be tender and sweet.

4 Meanwhile, make the browned butter. As the sprouts roast, melt the butter in a small skillet or heavy saucepan (it should be no more than 6 inches across or the butter will burn). Cook over medium heat until the butter is melted. Add the mustard seeds, increase the heat to medium-high, and cook, watching the pan carefully and swirling frequently, until the butter begins to foam and turns golden brown, about 2 minutes. Add the capers and lemon juice—the butter will sizzle—and immediately remove from the heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste and keep warm until the Brussels sprouts are ready.

5 Serve. Transfer the Brussels sprouts to a serving dish and add the browned butter. Toss to coat. Taste for salt, pepper, and lemon and serve immediately.

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