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12. Sprouts

Svitlana Schwartau

Institute of Food Resources

Introduction: Sprouts are the germinated seeds of various herbaceous plants, including vegetables, herbs, and field crops. The entire germinated plant (root, shoot, cotyledons, and remnant seed coat) is sold for use mainly in salads and sandwiches. Sprouting is considered a form of food processing, rather than agricultural crop production. [1]

Resources and methods: Sprouts are considered as wonder foods. They rank as the freshest and most nutritious of all vegetables available to the human diet. By a process of natural transmutation, sprouted food acquires vastly improved digestibility and nutritional qualities when compared to non-sprouted embryo from which it derives.

Sprouted foods have been part of the diet of many ancient races for thousands of years. Even to this day, the Chinese retain their fame for delicious Mung bean sprouts. Sprouts provide all the essential vitamins and minerals. They should form a vital component of our diet. Sprouting requires no constant care but only an occasional sprinkling of water.

All edible grains, seeds and legumes can be sprouted. Generally the following are used for sprouting:

Grains: Wheat, maize, ragi, bajra and barley.

Seeds: Alfalfa seeds, radish seeds, fenugreek seeds, carrot seeds, coriander seeds, pumpkin seeds and muskmelon seeds.

Legumes: Mung, Bengal gram, groundnut and Peas.

Alfalfa, as the name in Arabic signifies, is the king of all sprouts. Grown as a plant, its roots are known to burrow as much as 12 meters into the subsoil to bring up valuable trace minerals of which manganese is especially important to health and digestion ; it is a vital component of human insulin. Apart from minerals, Alfalfa is also a rich source of vitamins A,B,C,E and K and amino acids. Sesame seeds are another good source of nourishment. They contain all the essential amino acids in their 20 per cent protein content and higher concentration of calcium than does milk. They are high in unsaturated fats, vitamin E and vitamin B complex, besides other live nutrients.

Germination A good variety of seeds should be used for sprouting. It should be ensured that the seeds, legumes or grains are of the sproutable type. Soybeans do not sprout well as they often become sour. Wheat has to be grown in soil. It is advisable to use seeds which are not chemically treated as this slows down the germination rate. The seeds should be washed thoroughly and then soaked overnight in a jar of pure water. The jar should be covered with cheesecloth or wire screening. The duration of soaking will depend upon the size of the seed. Small seeds are soaked for five hours, medium size for eight hours and beans and grains for 10 to 12 hours. On the following morning, the seeds should be rinsed and the water drained off. Not more than one-fourth of the jar should be filled with the seeds for sprouting. Soaking makes the seeds, grains or legumes fatty, pulpy and full of water. It should, therefore, be ensured that the jar has enough room for the seeds to expand during sprouting. They will expand about eight times their original size. The jar should be kept at a place which is exposed neither to chill nor hot winds. It should also be ensured that the mouth of the jar is not completely covered so as to allow air in. The seeds should be rinsed and water drained off three times every day till they are ready to eat. [2]

Conclusions: Sprouts - the dormant energy of any grain, seed or legume is the source of life and growth potential that it contains. As the growth process begins during sprouting, food enzymes are activated, nutrient levels increase and new vitamins and minerals are taken on. In fact, per calorie sprouts are said to provide more vitamins, minerals, enzymes and proteins than any other food. Sprouts are also high in phytonutrients and chlorophyll, which play an antioxidant role in your body.

References

1. The Raw Truth by Jeremy A Safron, (Celestial Arts, Toronto, 2003) ISBN 1-58761-172-4 (pbk.)
2. How can I grow and use Sprouts as living food. (Shipard 2008) ISBN 978-0-9758252-0-4

Scientific supervisor: Galina Cherednichenko