

What's the latest word on sprouts?

Healthy and popular:

Sprouts contain high levels of vitamins A, B-complex, and C; and are great sources of fiber, protein and essential minerals. At 4 – 6 times the nutritional value of the fully grown vegetable itself, sprouts are an inexpensive and tasty addition to locally available produce. For these reasons sprouts are featured on many restaurant menus and can be purchased at virtually every health food store and supermarket in California.

Here at VV we offer a full range of organic sprouts from four Bay Area growers: Forever Green Farms, R Gang, New Natives and Salad Cosmo. In addition to everyone's old favorite, alfalfa, our sprout growers offer more eclectic sprouts such as daikon, wheatberry, sunflower and pea shoot. Mixed sprouts include spicy salad combinations (with onion and radish sprouts), and mixed sprouted beans. If you haven't experimented with these delicious varieties, now's the time!

Negative press:

A recent article published in JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association, gained significant attention in the national press. The article described two incidences of salmonella contamination from alfalfa sprouts that took place in 1995, and unfortunately gave the impression that bacterial infection from contaminated sprouts is a serious and recurring problem. In fact, since the outbreaks occurred four years ago the FDA and USDA have implemented a set of strict guidelines and sprout growers have been heavily regulated. As a result, bacterial infection from sprouts grown in California has dropped to nil. The most significant regulation is that all seeds be sanitized by a 20,000 parts per million chlorine solution in order to eliminate the possibility of salmonella or e coli bacteria in the seed stock. The State of California has allowed that sprouts grown using this sanitation process can be marketed as organic. As many sprout growers (both conventional and organic) are opposed to this high level of chlorine, tests are now being conducted on other ways of killing potential bacteria. We will keep you posted on developments as they become public. Meanwhile, please continue to support our growers - they are all deeply committed to the sanitation requirements, and have not compromised on quality standards put in place before the recent attacks.

Broccoli sprouts brouhaha continues:

Researchers found in 1997 that broccoli sprouts contain 20 – 50 times more sulforaphane, a powerful anti-cancer agent, than the average fully grown broccoli plant. Immediately following the release of this information, a company run by the son of the researchers obtained a patent on producing broccoli sprouts for food; this patent gives the company exclusive rights to turn any broccoli seed into broccoli sprouts. Sprout growers are understandably upset, and are now considering whether to bring legal action against the company. In the meantime, many sprout growers are producing broccoli sprouts in defiance of the patent. Organic broccoli sprouts are also on the horizon, so stay tuned!