

Growing Sprouts

If you're new to eating sprouts, don't make too much at first. Once you get the hang of it, you can start another jar three days after you start the first jar. The next jars will be ready after you finish eating the first batch.

The most important point: when you strain seeds, make sure that they're really strained. Sprouting is remarkable; all you need are the seeds and water. But add too much water and the seeds may rot. Nevertheless, it's pretty difficult to make the seeds rot, as long as you follow the steps carefully.

Choose and Measure

Here are the best choices of each type of sprout source.

- Best seeds: alfalfa, clover.
- Best beans: mung, lentil, garbanzo.
- Best nuts: almonds, filberts (hazelnuts).
- Best grains: wheat berries, rye.

The next list indicates what amount of sprout source is appropriate.

- small seeds: 2-3 tablespoons (30-45 ml).
- medium seeds: 1/4-1/2 cup (65-125 grams).
- large beans and grains: 1 cup (250 g).
- sunflower seeds: 2 cups (500 g).

Soak the Seeds

Soak Overnight



As noted, a large variety of seeds, beans, nuts, and grains can be sprouted. For the sake of simplicity, this tutorial will explain alfalfa sprouting, and will provide additional information for other sprouting as necessary.

- **Measure:** Before you go to bed one night, measure the correct amount of seeds--in this case, 2-3 tablespoons (30-45 ml) of alfalfa sprouts.
- Any time you cook with seeds or beans, it's a good practice to inspect them before you go any further. Take the portion of seeds or beans, and pour them out onto a large plate, serving dish, or baking sheet. Push the seeds on one side of the dish, and inspect them for broken or withered seeds, and small stones or lumps of dirt. (If you have any kids, this a good time to bring them into the act.) After they're sorted, pour them into a strainer and give them a good rinse.
- **Pour** the rinsed seeds into the jar. (If you're sprouting large beans, grains, or nuts, use a large bowl.)
- **Cover** them with adequate water--a few inches (6-8 cm) above the level of the seeds. Let the seeds soak overnight. Medium-sized seeds should be soaked 8-12 hours, and large

beans and nuts can soak for 12-24 hours.

- **Note:** Water, water everywhere...but it's not always fit to drink. Or for that matter, grow sprouts with. Many municipal water supplies around the world have been contaminated by industrial and agricultural pollutants. If you soak the seeds in that water, your sprouts may absorb those pollutants and pass them on to you. Eating sprouts made in contaminated water may have an adverse health affect over time, so consider using filtered or spring water for sprouting.

Strain

Next morning, cover the mouth of the jar with cheesecloth, and fasten with the rubber band. Turn over the jar in the sink. The cheesecloth acts as a strainer, holding in the seeds and letting out the water. If you're using the bowl method, use the strainer to strain out the soaking water and rinse the seeds.

Note: Some people save this soaking water. It contains valuable nutrients that you can mix into a health shake with other ingredients like fruit and yogurt. Or use it for your houseplants--they'll be very grateful.



- **Shake** the jar (or strainer) a few times to remove all of the water from last night's soak.
- **Rinse:** Fill up with water, and again drain out the water, ending with a few hearty shakes. Hold the jar up to the light; the seeds should be mostly dry. If there's too much water left in the jar, the seeds may rot over the next few days. But if you're even slightly careful to drain the seeds, that probably won't happen.
- **To ensure complete drainage**, some folks store the jar upside-down in a glass baking dish or plastic tub. Rest the jar on the side of the dish, or up against the wall--any excess water drains out, without any more attention from you.
- **Repeat:** On the evening of the same day, you'll repeat the rinsing process. You'll continue this morning and evening rinsing for 4 or 5 days (in warm climates, figure a day or two less than that). If you're feeling particularly keen on sprouting, you can rinse it a third time at noon.
- **Watch for the growth:** you'll see green leaves sprouting on seeds, and white shoots on beans, nuts, and grains.



- **Harvest:**

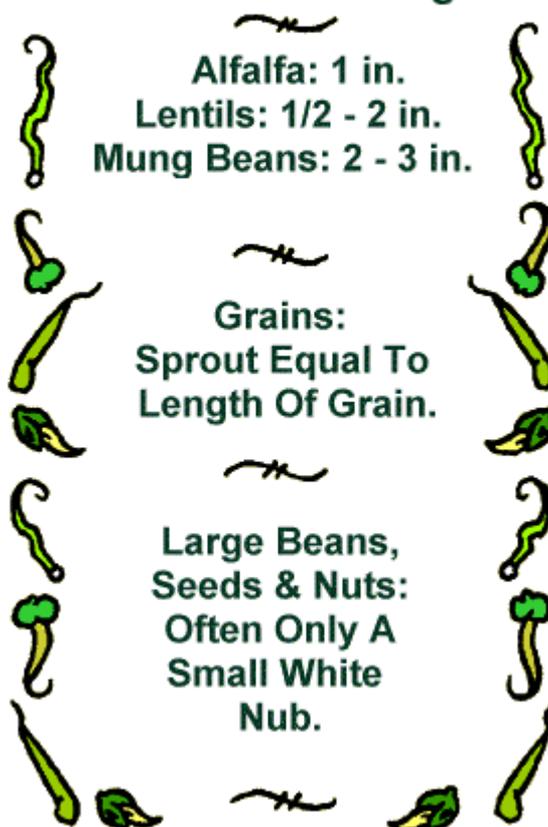
After four or five days, the sprouts will reach their peak of flavor and nutritional value. Give them a final rinse; drain with a hearty shake. Now they're ready to be prepared and devoured by the hungry masses.

So many uses! Your biggest problem with sprouting is choosing among these alternatives.

- Add to salads and sandwiches, and as a garnish on soups.
- Puree seeds and beans to make a fantastic sandwich spread or vegetable dip. For flavors, try adding tahini, lemon, and garlic for a middle Eastern flair; or fresh tomato and basil for a Mediterranean touch.
- Cook bean sprouts: lightly stir-fry them with other vegetables, or add to other recipes like vegetable burgers. Also very good when steamed with shredded carrot and cabbage.
- Sprouted grains are a bit trickier to use. They're often ground up and baked at low temperatures (220 degrees F/90 degrees C) to make bread, or added to recipes like vegetable burgers and casseroles.

Harvest Time!

Recommended Lengths:



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