

I Grew Something Green!

By: Chloe Feingold

Some Long Backstory that always comes before recipes...

I have always loved alfalfa sprouts, particularly on Dutch crunch roll with roast beef (back in my bread eating days) but particularly since my switch to less processed foods/paleo as most of my diet I have returned time and time again to alfalfa sprouts. Why? Their slight crunch and mildly bitter taste pairs well with meats, salad, or even on their own. BUT, they're expensive, rot quickly, and I have never really had a good method for truly making sure they were clean. So, when tasked with a project where I had to cultivate my own food, I thought what better than alfalfa sprouts! I read Wiki article after Wiki article and while it seemed kind of complicated, they are actually pretty simple to grow, require little attention, and are difficult to mess up. They came a long much more quickly than my windowsill herb garden, in which my oregano still refuses to sprout, but that is a story for another blog. Today we're going to talk about my one (and only) successful gardening project in YEARS. So yes, with or without a green thumb you too can grow your own alfalfa sprouts because if I can do it probably anyone can. So, for all you amateur home gardeners (or professionals though you probably wouldn't turn to this post) here's how to make your own alfalfa sprouts and feel like a gardening pro. If you're scared you might grow something poisonous, I was too, but as I said these are pretty hard to mess up, so here we go.

****Note:** My family and I all participated in my gardening experiment by taste testing and lived to tell the tale

First Things First:

In order to do this project, you need a few materials, easily sourced and relatively inexpensive (I did this whole project for under \$20, and with \$20 you can buy a significant amount of seeds to make multiple batches)

- 1 bag of alfalfa sprouts (\$7-\$20)
- A tablespoon (to measure out seeds)
- A supply of running water

One of the following-

For the janky rig (the method used in this blog):

- One bowl
- One mason jar
- Paper towels
- A rubber band

(can replace paper town and rubber band with a sprouting lid \$5 (check amazon))

For the super pro way:

Buy a seed sprouter off of the internet, will probably be easier and less fragile but will cost around \$13-\$20, however these often come with seeds

As a slave to my newfound love of growing alfalfa sprouts (and my curiosity about other types) I purchased a seed sprouter for my next batches



Next steps:

Once you have gathered your materials you are ready to begin, so here's the deal. This whole thing is like three main steps that you repeat over and over again until you have worked up the confidence to eat the blob you have spawned (just kidding, they will be green and longish and look like what you might see in the grocery store, I will attach a picture at the end for reference).

1. The first step is to measure out two tablespoons of the seeds.



2. Once you have done that you need to rinse them (I was scared they would fall through my strainer so I did this weird thing with a bowl, but in hindsight there are probably better ways to do that, a cheesecloth might be helpful if you have one, or a sprouting lid).



3. Once you have rinsed the seeds you have to put them in a mason jar and cover with about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cool water.



4. Once you have done that, you need to cover the mason jar with a lid (sprouting screen, sprouting lid, cheesecloth, or in this case a paper towel attached to the mason jar by a rubber band)



5. Now you leave them unattended for a whole night so the seeds can soak.
6. When you wake up in the morning and run down to see if anything has happened (it won't, gardening requires patience, although this project may be doable even for slightly impatient people) you need to drain all the water off the alfalfa seeds.
 - a. I inverted the mason jar and let the water drain out through the paper towel. Then I put on a new paper towel before the next step.
7. Once you have drained them, invert the jar on a bowl on a diagonal so the seeds can continue to drain.



8. 8 hours later... rinse and drain the seeds again
9. Continue doing steps 6-8 at least twice a day for the first few days. After about day 3, I did it once a day and it was fine. Repeat for as many days as it takes for the sprouts to reach your desired length. Three inches is probably ideal, and it should take about 3 days-1 week.



Day 2



Day 4



Day 7

10. *This step is optional*- The sprouts you might find in the store look really green with no brown, which is likely because they have been dehulled. When growing your own sprouts, you might see some brown and it is totally normal however it is not necessarily the best aesthetic. So, you can dehull them.

To do so: simply take the finished sprouts and submerge them in a bowl of cool water. Gently move them around with a fork and the hulls will rise to the top and can be scraped off leaving you with nice green sprouts.

11. Enjoy them however you want to eat them, and you can store them in the fridge for a few days.

Disclaimer:

- If you turn to the internet, some articles might tell you to leave the seeds in a dark place. I had them on my kitchen counter and it worked just fine.
- If at any point you smell something strange or have a bad feeling about your sprouts, throw them away, clean your materials thoroughly, and start again. Sprouts can be susceptible to mold.

My Alfalfa Sprouts Memoir

In the end this was an excellent project to make something green and edible. It was relatively straight forward, non-toxic, and pretty easy to complete. Might I say it was even a little bit fun and it was rewarding to see and eat the end product.

Growing my own food was also rewarding because of the knowledge I have about food sourcing and farming methods from my social justice class I took at Santa Clara University (for students seeing this it is called ENV5 191 and I highly recommend). While it might not seem like it, even growing alfalfa sprouts helps you contribute to sustainability, particularly because of transportation. It is estimated that food can be transported up to 1,500 miles before it gets to your plate. Food is transported by planes, trucks, etc. all of which burn fossil fuels. As you have probably been informed, fossil fuels have detrimental effects on the environment and are a big concern for problems such as climate change. By growing your own food, you contribute to minimizing transportation of food and the emissions that come with it. Not to mention, that aside from the negative impacts on the environment there are also other side effects of burning fossil fuels. Moreover, sprouts (and foods in the stores) also come in plastic packaging which contribute to waste. The moral of the story is growing your own food is a great way to avoid the harmful byproducts of how food gets to you. This helps the greater community by improving the environment and lessening waste. So growing sprouts might indirectly contribute to improving the world, pretty cool huh?

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Citations:

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