



**Sprouting nonsense?** Brussels are Britain's third most hated food, after liver and fish.

You're cooking  
sprouts all  
wrong, says  
expert

Literacy

They are the nation's most hated vegetable, and yet Asda will sell 140 million Brussels sprouts in the two weeks before Christmas. Love them or loathe them, why are we so obsessed with them?

Literacy

Why do so many people hate Brussels sprouts? The theories abound. The most common complaint is that they are too bitter. Some argue that they are particularly disgusting to children, who have more taste buds than older people.

Literacy

More recently a team of scientists claimed that it is determined by our DNA: only 50% of people have the memorably named gene TAS2R38, which allows them to taste the bitter chemical phenylthiocarbamide. Meanwhile, sprout fans spy a media conspiracy: we have been conditioned to hate the vegetables through years of unfair prejudice.

**Literacy**



**The science behind hating  
Brussels sprouts**

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**Literacy**

Now Britain's leading sprout expert has a new theory: we have been cooking them all wrong. Boiling them makes them 'turn soggy and rubbish,' said Matthew Rawson, head of the Brassica Growers Association, this week. Cutting a cross in the bottom is even worse, as it lets in more water. 'People who do that have ruined the Brussels sprout.' His alternative? Steaming, frying, or even microwaving them.

However they are cooked, the little green vegetables will be sure to cause arguments at Christmas dinners up and down the country during the festive season.

**Literacy**

But why? After a year of turbulent news stories and fascinating developments in technology, why discuss something as trivial as sprouts?

The answer may lie with Parkinson's law of triviality, also known as the **'bikeshed effect'**: The principle that the amount of discussion is inversely proportional to the complexity of the topic. In other words, the trickier a subject, the less we want to talk about it.

This Christmas, should we try harder to fight the bikeshed effect, and discuss more meaningful topics?

**Literacy**

What would you rather talk about at Christmas dinner: the food or the state of the world?

What are the main topics of conversation around your dinner table?

What would your top three topics be?

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adjective of the day

**inverse**

Something that is reversed in position, order, direction, or tendency

Removing one's shoes is the *inverse* of putting one's shoes on.

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verb of the day

**convene**

come or bring together in a meeting or assembly

*The family **convened** around the table  
and discussed sprouts at great length.*

**Literacy**

It's not what's under the  
Christmas tree that matters  
it's who around it...



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# loquacious

FIND OUT THE  
MEANING OF THIS  
WORD.

USE IT CORRECTLY  
IN YOUR WORK OR  
WHEN IN LESSON TO  
EARN P POINTS.



*Word Banksy*

