

# Cleo Coyle's Holiday Brussels Sprouts with Blue Cheese, Bacon and Dried Figs

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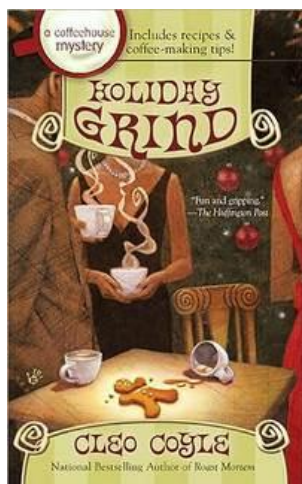
“What does  
Christmas taste like?”



When I wrote about the flavors of the Season in *Holiday Grind*, I tried to come up with an array of evocative tastes that my amateur sleuth might want to feature on her coffeehouse's holiday menu. Consequently, nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves spiced up Clare Cosi's pastry case in the form of cookies, cakes, and muffins while sweet syrups based on liqueurs such as rum, amaretto, and crème de menthe brought spirited cheer to her *Fa-la-la-la lattes* ([click here](#) for one of Clare's recipes). Of course, these are only a few of the many flavors that we enjoy at this time of year whether they are attached to our family traditions, ethnic backgrounds, religious celebrations, or the discoveries that we make as we dine at new tables far and wide.



One of the holiday tastes I'd like to share with you today comes with the yearly availability of English Stilton at my favorite cheese monger in New York's Greenwich Village, where my *Coffeehouse Mysteries* are set. Stilton is traditionally enjoyed at Christmastime; and for many years, I've paired pungent chunks of it with fresh figs, dried fruits, or sweet slices of ripe pear.



I still remember the excellent Pear and Stilton Salad I ate years ago at Bryant Park Grill, the airy restaurant found behind the Main Branch of New York's Public Library, a memorable landmark that I also used as a featured setting in *Holiday Grind*. That amazing salad gave me my first clue that a blue-cheese-and-fruit pairing would work well as a base for other dishes—like this one!

You don't have to use Stilton for this recipe. Any blue cheese will work nicely: Danish blue (aka Danablu), Italian Gorgonzola, or French Roquefort. If you're not a fan of dried figs, try substituting dried cranberries, which is an equally festive holiday flavor. I hope you like the recipe. Eat with joy to the world!

*Happy Holidays!*

~ Cleo Coyle, author of  
*The Coffeehouse Mysteries*

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**Servings:** 4

## Ingredients:

3 slices thick bacon (or 4 slices thin)  
1 large yellow onion, chopped  
1 10-oz package of whole Brussels sprouts (18-20 sprouts)  
10 dried figs, roughly chopped (or 3/4 cup dried cranberries)  
Crumbled blue cheese (Stilton is perfect for the holiday season!)

**(1) Prepare sprouts and figs:** Wash and dry sprouts and slice each in half. Chop dried figs. Set aside. (If you aren't a big fan of figs, try 3/4 cup dried cranberries.)



**(2) Brown bacon pieces:** Cut bacon slices into small pieces. In large skillet, fry bacon pieces until browned but not crisp. NOTE: As soon as you move to the next step in this recipe, the bacon will stop browning, so make sure your bacon displays some nice caramelized color before you move to step three and toss in your onions.



**(3) Add chopped onions:** Throw in the chopped onions and sauté until lightly caramelized. Remember: color equals flavor! If you move to the next step before the onions get a bit of color on them, they will not taste as sweet and the dish will not be as tasty. As with so many things in life, patience is a virtue, especially when sautéing onions!



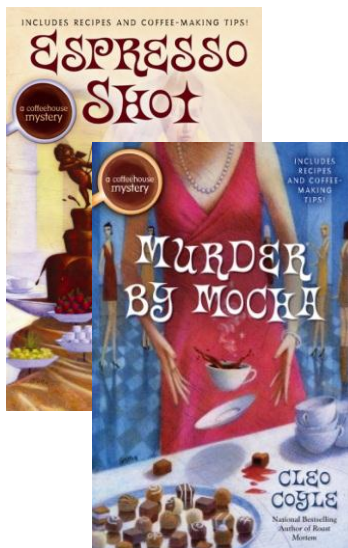
**(4) Toss in sprouts and figs:** With the bacon browned and the onions sweetly caramelized, you are ready to throw your sliced sprouts and chopped figs into the pan. Fold these in well, until they are absolutely glistening with the rich, delicious flavor of rendered bacon fat!

**(5) Add water, cover, and simmer:** Here is the trickiest step. Add about 1-1/4 cups of water. This amount may vary depending on the weather and your geographic altitude. That's why you need to watch this process and adjust it as needed.

Cover and simmer the mixture on medium-high heat for about 8 to 10 minutes. After about 8 minutes, lift the lid and stir. Bite into one of the sprouts to see how far it is from properly cooked through. You want a nice "al dente" texture. If the sprout is too hard, replace the lid and keep going, checking every few minutes.

Also check to see if the water is evaporating too slowly or quickly. If too slowly, remove the lid and turn up the heat. If too quickly, add a little more water so the mixture does not burn. While you do not want this dish to be swimming in liquid at the end of the cooking process, neither do you want it to scorch. The trick here is getting the water to evaporate at the proper rate so that the sprouts are perfectly cooked through and still browned a bit in the pan, giving you that beautiful little caramelized rim that you see in my photos. (Yes, color = flavor. But black = burned!)

**(6) Finish:** To serve, spoon onto serving plates and crumble your favorite blue cheese on top, whether it's a Danish blue, an Italian Gorgonzola, or a French Roquefort. For a special treat at this time of year, try English Stilton, which you can also serve as an appetizer with sweet slices of pear, or as a final course with a lovely glass of port before coffee, tea, or espresso.



*Eat with Joy!*

*~ Cleo Coyle, author of  
The Coffeehouse Mysteries*

To get more of my recipes, win free coffee, or learn more about the books in my bestselling culinary mystery series, visit my Web site:

[www.CoffeehouseMystery.com](http://www.CoffeehouseMystery.com)

