

Florida Food Fare

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CABBAGE

History: Historians tell us that cabbage is one of the oldest vegetables and it is truly an international vegetable. Some forms of cabbage were grown in their European and Mediterranean homelands as early as 2,500 years ago. Ancient Greeks treasured the vegetable for the curative powers. It was first introduced to North America in 1541. Cabbage belongs to the *Cruciferae* (mustard) family and is of the genus *Brassica*, species *oleracea*, variety *capitata*. The plant is cultivated for its large leafy head. Flowers are formed on a terminal raceme (growth axis) and have four sepals (outer leaves) in the form of a cross, thus the family name.

Cabbage is a hardy, cool-season crop that does best under uniform cool, moist conditions. Although only ten percent of the nation's yearly supply of cabbage comes from Florida, about one-third of the winter supply comes from this state. Most of the Florida crop is shipped as a fresh green vegetable, with little or none stored for any length of time.

Types and Varieties: The market demand is mostly for fresh, green, solid, round heads that weigh from 2 to 3 1/2 pounds each. The cabbage varieties grown in Florida are primarily of this type in addition, some red cabbage and savoy cabbage are grown for the fresh market. Florida markets cabbage eight months of the year, with volume harvesting beginning in December, peaking in March-April, and ending in June.

Golden Acre: Heads are round, smooth-leaved, green, and weigh 2 to 6 pounds. **Savoy Cabbage:** Leaves are crinkly, densely curled and yellowish-

green; heads are round and lightly compacted. The loose heads are best suited for use as cooked cabbage. When thinly sliced, the crinkled leaves are interesting both in shape and texture. **Red Cabbage:** Deep red to purple-red heads are similar in size and shape to green cabbage. **Chinese Cabbage:** Although sold as a cabbage, this vegetable is really a member of the mustard family. The type that is most often grown in Florida is pe-tsai; it is headed, elongated and compact, with green leaves that are slightly wrinkled and thin and have a broad, white midrib.

Nutritive and Health Value: Recent research by nutritionists and medical researchers have found the “cruciferous” family of vegetables to be excellent fighters of certain types of cancer – particularly prostate, cervical, colon, rectal and bladder cancers – as well as helping to prevent strokes. They recommend eating at least three servings from this vegetable family. These vegetables include: all varieties of cabbage, beet greens, bok choy, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, collard greens, garden cress, horseradish, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, radishes, rutabaga, Swiss chard, turnips and turnip greens.

The calorie yield for cabbage is low unless a rich sauce, dressing, butter, margarine or other fat is added as seasoning. A half-cup serving of shredded, cooked cabbage of the common varieties yields only 16 calories. One cup of shredded raw cabbage yields about the same number of calories, depending on the variety. As coleslaw, the same amount of cabbage may yield 60 calories – still low in calories compared to many other foods. It is also ideal for adding fiber and roughage to the diet. Cabbage can also be a good source of vitamin C if eaten raw or lightly steamed. Vitamin C is heat sensitive and will be destroyed by overcooking or cooking in too much water. Other nutrients in 1 cup of raw cabbage include: 1 g protein, 4 g carbohydrates, 0 g fat, 0 g cholesterol, 12 mg sodium and 172 mg potassium.

Selection and Storage: Look for firm or hard heads of cabbage that are heavy for their size. Outer leaves should be a good green or red color (depending on type), reasonably fresh, and free from serious blemishes. The outer leaves (called “wrapper” leaves) fit loosely on the head and are usually discarded, but too many loose wrapper leaves on a head cause extra waste. Avoid new cabbage with wilted or decayed outer leaves or with leaves turning decidedly yellow, as well as worm-eaten outer leaves which often indicate that the worm injury penetrates into the head. Refrigerate, unwashed, in a plastic bag for up to 1 week (up to 4 days for napa cabbage). One pound of cabbage will yield: 7-8 one-half cup serving of raw shredded cabbage, or 4-5 one-half cup servings of cooked cabbage.

Recipes:

Cabbage Patch Stew

1 pound lean ground beef or turkey breast	1/2 teaspoon salt, optional
2 teaspoons canola oil	1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 large onion, sliced	1 teaspoon chili powder
1 large clove garlic, minced	3 cups water
2 medium carrots, thinly sliced	1 cup cooked tomatoes
1/4 cup celery diced	1 cup red kidney beans, do not drain
1 medium bay leaf	1 1/2 pounds cabbage, coarsely chopped, about 7 cups
1 teaspoon thyme	

In a Dutch oven, over medium heat add oil, ground meat, onion and garlic. Cook until meat is brown, stirring occasionally to break up meat. Drain off fat. Add, carrots, celery, bay leaf, thyme, salt, pepper, chili powder and water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and cook uncovered for 10-12 minutes. Add tomatoes, kidney beans and cabbage. Stir to blend. Cover and simmer for 12-15 minutes until all vegetables are tender. Stir in chopped parsley. Remove bay leaf. Serve warm in bowls. Serves 8. **Optional but good:** *add a serving (1/2 cup) of mashed potatoes to each bowl before filling with stew.*

Pennsylvania Red Cabbage

2 tablespoons bacon drippings or other oil	1 teaspoon salt (or less)
1/4 cup packed brown sugar	Dash of pepper
1/4 cup vinegar	4 cups shredded red cabbage
1/2 teaspoon caraway seed	2 cups cubed, unpeeled apples
1/4 cup water	

Heat bacon drippings or oil in a skillet. Stir in brown sugar, vinegar, caraway seed, water, salt and pepper. Add cabbage and apples, stirring to coat. Cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally. For crisp cabbage, cook 15 minutes. For tender cabbage, cook 25-30 minutes. Makes 6 servings.

Hungarian Cabbage and Noodles (*Haluska*)

1/4 cup butter	1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 large onion, peeled, sliced	1 box or bag of large egg noodles, cooked, and drained
1 small head cabbage, cut into strips	
1 teaspoon salt (or less)	1 pint fat free sour cream

Melt butter in large pan or pot, large enough to hold chopped cabbage. Sauté cabbage and onion in butter until glossy and tender. Add salt and pepper. Cover and let cabbage mixture cook over low heat for about 15 minutes. Add cooked

drained egg noodles and mix. Serve with sour cream, to be added as desired. Add salt to taste. Serves 4 to 6.

Florida Cole Slaw

7 - 8 cups (1 head) savoy cabbage, finely sliced 1/2 cup fresh avocado chunks
1/2 cup sweet orange sections 1/2 cup sweet onion slices
1/2 cup grapefruit sections

Dressing

1/2 cup buttermilk 1 teaspoon sugar
1/2 cup low fat mayonnaise 2 tablespoons fresh mint, chopped
1 tablespoon lemon juice

In a large bowl combine cabbage, orange and grapefruit sections, avocado and onion. Toss lightly until ingredients are mixed.

In a small bowl, mix dressing ingredients. Pour dressing over cabbage mixture and toss lightly to coat. Serve immediately or best if refrigerated 1-2 hours to blend flavors.

Dublin Corned Beef and Cabbage

(Perfect for St. Patrick's Day)

5 pounds corned beef brisket 1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 large onion, stuck with 6 whole cloves 1 small bunch parsley
6 carrots, peeled and sliced 1 large head cabbage, cut into quarters
8 potatoes, peeled and cubed

Horseradish Sauce:

1 cup fat free half and half 2 – 3 tablespoons prepared horseradish

Put beef in a large pot and cover with cold water. Place thyme and parsley in a small square of cheesecloth or muslin and tie corners to secure seasonings inside the bag. Add all ingredients except cabbage to pot and bring to a boil, uncovered. Turn to simmer and cook for 3 hours. Skim fat from top as it rises. Remove spice bag and onion. Add cabbage. Simmer for 20 minutes until cabbage is cooked. Remove the meat and cut into pieces. Place on center of a large platter. Strain the cabbage and season it heavily with black pepper.

Surround the beef with cabbage, carrots and potatoes. Serve with horseradish sauce. Serves 8.