

Seasonal Eating
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Cabbage: Comforting Family Meals
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Cabbage doesn't exactly bring to mind glamorous, beautiful dishes and upscale dining. What this rather homely vegetable brings to mind for me is comforting family meals. My first memory of cabbage on the table was what Mom called New England Boiled Dinner. Cabbage, potatoes, carrots and onions were simmered with a corned beef for hours on the stove, filling the house with a mouth watering aroma. The beef fell apart it was so tender and all the vegetables were juicy and delicious. The newest addition of cabbage to my Mom's dinner table is to use it thinly sliced on fish tacos instead of lettuce. It gives a really crunchy texture and great flavor to make your tacos extra special. (Yes, fish tacos – pieces of fried fish in a corn tortilla with sliced cabbage and a jalapeno tartar sauce – delicious, try it!)



There are over 400 varieties of cabbage but they are all very nutritious. Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamins C and K and contains high levels of glucosinolates, phytochemicals that may help protect against cancer. Using a variety of different types of cabbages and using them in different ways from raw to boiled will give you the best benefits from this powerhouse vegetable. Green cabbage is probably the most familiar and is a good multipurpose cabbage for using raw as in slaw or cooked. Red cabbage takes longer to mature and, therefore, is a little tougher. However, the flavor is milder and sweeter than some other cabbages. Thin slices added to a green salad give a punch of color and crunch. Red cabbage is good for pickling and in slaws or cooked German style with a sweet and sour flavor. Napa cabbage, the longer, crinkly heads, is a type of Chinese cabbage and is a good option for raw salads or steaming. Bok Choy is a good option for stir frying and you can use both the white stems and the leaves. Savoy cabbage is the round crinkly head and is more tender than regular green cabbage. It is great for cooking and making cabbage rolls as it bends more easily.

Red cabbage will tend to turn blue when cooking in the presence of alkaline, so add a little bit of an acidic ingredient such as vinegar or lemon juice to keep the bright reddish color (1/2 tablespoon per cup of liquid). If you object to the odor of cooked cabbage, try a quick cooking recipe, leave it uncovered, use as little water as possible and make sure your cabbage is fresh and has not been stored too long. Try to use your cabbage within 7 days of purchase.

Southern Style Cabbage is a simple but delicious recipe for cooked green cabbage. The bacon gives it a little extra flavor boost. Tip: Whenever I cook bacon to use crumbled in the end, I like to cut it up into pieces when raw and then cook it. It cooks more evenly and easily and you don't get your hands all greasy at the end crumbling it up. Pair your cabbage with pork chops and baked apples for a great fall dinner.

For more ideas on using cabbage, cranberries and kale, visit the Bedford County Extension website Seasonal Eating page. The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration will be held on Wednesday, November 16 at 12:00 noon at the UT Extension Office. Call the office at 684-5971 for more information or to sign up by November 14th and bring \$5.00 to class to cover the samples. The December Seasonal Eating Demonstration will be on December 7 due to the holidays later in the month and will feature apples and pomegranates.

Southern Style Cabbage

- 4 slices bacon
- 1 head green cabbage, cored and sliced
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Black pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup water

In a large Dutch oven, cook bacon until browned and crispy. Remove bacon to a paper towel, leaving drippings in pan. Add cabbage and onion and toss to coat with drippings. Add sugar, salt, pepper and water. Cover, turn heat to medium low and cook for about 35-40 minutes or until cabbage is very tender. Crumble bacon over the top.