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Cabbage!

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Cabbage varieties may grow as round, flattened or pointed heads. Regular irrigation is needed. If the plant does not get enough moisture from watering, it will taste bitter instead of being sweet, juicy and firm.

Growing

Cabbage can be sown in early spring for a summer harvest. Grow seedlings for four to six weeks before setting outdoors. Set plants 12 to 18 inches apart.

Sow in May for a fall harvest. Seeds may be directly sown ¼ inch deep, planting three seeds every 15 to 18 inches, in rows 18 to 36 inches apart. Thin to one plant per group. Seeds also may be grown in cell packs at this time for transplanting in June.

Cabbage grows best in temperatures of 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Compost may benefit the soil and plant growth. Monitor closely for cabbage worms and treat when needed.

Harvesting

To harvest the cabbage, cut around the outer head leaves. Prevent mature cabbage heads from splitting in the garden by cutting part of the root system to reduce water absorption into the head. Cabbage tolerates light frosts. Young, actively growing heads store best.

Storing

Cabbages are stored best in root cellars because they need cool, dry environments. They will store well in a 40 F or below refrigerator for several weeks. Storing them in 32 to 40 F temperatures with 95% humidity is ideal to make them last the longest. The usability of cabbage can be stretched out more by pickling and fermenting.

Preparing

After harvesting cabbages, remove the outer leaves, wilted leaves or any tissue that is damaged by insects. Rinse the heads and remove the core. Cabbage can be roasted, boiled or sautéed, used raw in fresh salads or fermented into sauerkraut or kimchi.

Preserving

Fermenting: Sauerkraut means "sour cabbage" in German. To make sauerkraut, use a cabbage from a mid to late-season crop. Juices will be drawn out from the cabbage and should not be removed from the fermenting container. A 1-gallon slow cooker should be able to hold 5 pounds of shredded cabbage. Because the fermentation process is anaerobic (meaning without air), cabbage and all its liquid should be covered to prevent air from entering. A fermentation temperature of 70 to 75 F will ferment the cabbage in three to four weeks. A temperature below 60 F may prevent fermentation from occurring, and a temperature above 75 F may result in the cabbage becoming too soft.

See "Sauerkraut: From Garden to Table" (FN433) from NDSU Extension for details.

Freezing: Cabbage is not the best vegetable for freezing. If freezing cabbage, use a container made for freezer storage that is moisture/vapor resistant, durable and leak-proof. Freezing could cause off flavors and textures. Blanching cabbage may help before freezing to reduce color, flavor, texture and nutrient losses. Make sure that your freezer is not overpacked. You should have some space between packages of cabbages and other items, which helps air circulate and freeze the food.

Nutrition

One cup of chopped cabbage has about 20 calories, 0 g fat, 5 g carbohydrate, 1 g protein, 2 g fiber, 35 mg calcium, 150 mg potassium and 15 mg sodium. It also contains vitamins C, K and A, and folate.



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Recipes

Key to abbreviations

c. = cup
tsp. = teaspoon
Tbsp. = tablespoon
oz. = ounce
lb = pound(s)
g = gram
mg = milligram



Unstuffed Cabbage Casserole

2 Tbsp. canola oil
1 large onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 lb. ground beef, lean
2 Tbsp. tomato paste
1 (15-oz.) can tomatoes, diced
1 c. brown rice, uncooked
3 c. chicken stock
1 large head cabbage, roughly chopped
1 tsp. red pepper flakes
Black pepper, if desired
¼ tsp. oregano

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a large Dutch oven or pot over medium heat, heat oil. Add onion and garlic and cook until soft and fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add the ground beef to brown. Drain fat. Grease a 9- by 13-inch baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.

Stir in the tomato paste until beef is coated, then add diced tomatoes, rice and 2 cups chicken stock. Season with oregano, red pepper flakes and pepper if desired. Bring mixture to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Gradually stir in cabbage and cook until slightly wilted, about 5 minutes. Stir in remaining 1 cup broth.

Transfer mixture to the baking dish. Bake until rice is tender, about 60 minutes. Garnish with parsley before serving.

*Using parboiled rice will save on cooking time.

Made 13 servings. Each serving has 170 calories, 5 g fat, 20 g carbohydrate, 11 g protein, 3 g fiber and 45 mg sodium.



Large-batch Cabbage Salad

Dressing

¾ c. sugar
½ c. salad oil (such as canola or sunflower)
½ c. vinegar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. celery seed
1 tsp. pepper

Salad

1 head cabbage, chopped as for slaw (or a mixture of green and red)
1 small onion, chopped (about ½ c.)
½ green pepper, chopped
1 c. celery, diced finely

Note: You can substitute two small bags of chopped coleslaw mix if desired. Or you can use part red cabbage and part green for a more colorful salad.

Mix dressing ingredients thoroughly. Rinse all salad ingredients, drain thoroughly and prepare as directed. Mix in a large bowl and stir well. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Makes about 20 servings. Each serving has 100 calories, 6 g fat, 1 g protein, 12 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber and 135 mg sodium.

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