About Cabbage

History

Cabbage is an age-old friend. It is one of the oldest known vegetables grown in both the East and the West.

For financial luck in the New Year, a superstition said to hide a silver dollar outside on New Year’s Eve and then bring it in just before midnight on New Year’s Day, slit a hole in a cabbage, place the silver dollar in, and then cook and eat the cabbage. This old food superstition is widely known. Is it a coincidence, then, that one of our terms for money is “cabbage”?

Cabbage is one of the lowest calorie vegetables, with only 15 calories per 1-cup cooked serving. Cabbage is a rich source of vitamin C, vitamin K, fiber, iron, calcium, and potassium. It also contains vitamins A, E, and B6. The odor of cabbage comes from its sulfur content, which may help the body resist bacteria and protect the protoplasm of cells. It is said to aid in producing glossy hair and is considered a beneficial digestive aid and intestinal cleanser.

Cabbage, part of the crucifer family, is genetically the same species (*Brassica oleracea*) as broccoli, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, and Brussels sprouts. Although originally cabbage was a weedy, loose-leaf plant, today we are most familiar with the firm red or green heads.

How to Buy

Look for firm, heavy heads. Try not to buy one that has had many of the outer leaves removed because this reduces the nutritional value. Do not buy precut cabbage because it can lose its vitamin C due to air exposure.

How to Prepare

Cabbage can be cooked or eaten raw. It is a versatile vegetable that goes well with red wine, sage, thyme, caraway, dill, fennel, horseradish, apples, onions, chestnuts, and sour cream.

Steam wedges for 5 to 7 minutes. Top with butter and a pinch of salt and pepper or some grated cheese. Overcooked cabbage may produce a strong odor and flavor. Raw cabbage may be sliced thin, shredded, or cut into bite-size pieces and then tossed with one or more raw vegetables, such as carrots, green onions, or green peppers. Add a mayonnaise-yogurt dill dressing or vinaigrette dressing to make tasty coleslaw.

Cabbage heads can last from three weeks to two months in the refrigerator. Store in a plastic bag having a few punched holes so that air can circulate. A paper bag will also store cabbage well in the refrigerator. Leafy cabbages, such as Napa, are more perishable and will keep for about a week in the refrigerator.

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