Cabbage, The Vegetable of The Humble (and Sober)

Andrew Croft
Utah State University

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Ah, the good ol’ cabbage. A stalwart performer that has generously stocked larders for winter and kept peasants healthy for thousands of years. A modest vegetable if ever there was one, the nobility of the middle ages turned up their noses at it (as they did with most green vegetables!) and gave up loads of health benefits with it. The cabbage really doesn’t deserve that reputation, even despite the sulfurous scent of a potful cooking on the stove. And really, if this veggie needs a touch of class, why not a cabbage that come in a more “royal” hue?

Red cabbage is a relatively new development in the veggie’s long history. Cabbage itself has changed a great deal; a loose leaved type very similar to kale was likely cultivated around 1000 BCE, and was probably brought into northern and eastern Europe with the migrating Celtic tribes. “Bresic,” a very old Celtic word for cabbage, graces the name of the entire family of cabbage relatives, collectively called the Brassicas. When it reached Rome, it became a popular medicinal plant, valued as an anti-inflammatory wound dressing and eaten in large quantities to remain sober at social gatherings. No word on how well that worked out, but some people still eat cabbage today in the hope that it can chase away a hangover. Maybe that’s one reason cabbage is a traditional part of St. Patrick’s Day celebrations.

The best varieties for that holiday would probably be green, but the red varieties, also sometimes identified as purple (though they are the same thing) need some love too. The deep red-purple color in our cabbage is a strong visual example of pigments called anthocyanins. These pigments are found all across the plant kingdom, coloring up everything from flowers, fruit, and autumn leaves in vibrant shades of red, pink, and violet. They are so widespread that, without them, our world would be devoid of much of its color, and these substances do much more than add beauty. Ripe fruit often develops anthocyanins to advertise their ripeness to animals, like a blackberry ripening from tasteless pale green to a sweet and puckery black-purple.

They also serve as a kind of sunscreen to plants; an example can be seen when foliage exposed to strong sunlight flushes with dark purple colors, an action that reduces the penetration of light to the chlorophyll.

But most importantly to humans, the presence of anthocyanins is implicated with a wide range of extra health benefits. Scientists are just beginning to understand how large a role they play. These pigments are a type of antioxidant, and positively affect heart health, brain function, eyesight, and reduce inflammation. Coupled with the brassica family’s reputation as cancer fighters, red cabbage carries enough extra firepower to earn its place in the super food hall of fame. In fact, Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists identified thirty-six different kinds of anthocyanins in red cabbage. I’m in no way a dietician, but that sounds like a good thing to me. So eat up! Cabbage might be humble, but it definitely deserves a reoccurring place at the dinner table.

Andrew Croft

Steamed Cabbage Spring Rolls

Ready in: 30 minutes  Serves: 4

Ingredients
2 teaspoons sesame oil
1 teaspoon rice vinegar
½ cup bean sprouts
4 scallions
½ cup cabbage
½ red bell pepper
8 egg roll wraps

Directions
1. Heat sesame oil in a pan over medium heat.
2. Wash and slice the pepper into strips, then cook in the hot oil for two minutes.
3. Wash green onions and cabbage and then shred them.
4. Combined the pepper strips, green onion, cabbage, and rice vinegar into a medium sized bowl.
5. Place your first egg roll wrapper on a clean and dry work surface.
6. Place between 3 and 4 tablespoons of vegetables in the middle of the wrapper.
7. Fold over the farthest corner.
8. Fold over the last two side corners.
9. Place your finger into a cup of water and then run your wet finger along the side of the remaining corner.
10. Gently roll the spring roll towards you and rub your finger along the seams to seal.
11. Arrange the rolls in a steamer and steam for 10 minutes over boiling water.
12. Remove from heat.
13. Serve and Enjoy!

recipe by Shannon Babb
Announcements

Saturday pickup?
With school coming up it is going to be a busy time of year for all of us at the farm. We are considering switching all pickup to Saturdays at the farm (no campus pickup) from 11am-2pm starting either the first Saturday after school starts, Aug. 31, or the week immediately before (Aug. 24 as sort of a trial run). We recognize that the school year will be a busy time for most of you as well and perhaps the switch would make it easier on you too. Please email us and let us know if you would be able to pick up on Saturdays for the last 5-6 weeks (Aug. 24 or 31 through Sep. 28) of pickup.

Herbs in the Garden
-Thyme -Lemon balm -Hyssop
-Sage -Lavender -Catmint
-Garlic chives -Greek oregano -Chives
-Chamomile -Summer savory

Missed pickup policy:
If you forget to pickup your share for the week at your scheduled time, we are so sorry but you will have to forfeit the share for the week. If you let us know a week in advance that you will be gone, we can definitely work something out so you don’t miss a share. Also, you can have a friend, neighbor, or relative come pick up your share for you if you will be gone. They just need to come at your scheduled pickup time and let us know who they are picking up for.

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On the Farm News

Meet Rythzon
Do you ever think back to the days when you were a kid? Since I was younger, my perspective on life has changed and it is quite different now. At a younger age I felt a bit forgotten and struggled with acceptance from my elders and peers. And my observation with kids of today is that the same lack of attention or respect is given to them. It seems kids need to be acknowledged more for their abilities. They are the future and we must help them in their understanding of the world and to reach their potential.

Rythzon Setema our neighbor of twelve sure brings alive my memories of youth. His intelligence and willingness to learn brings a lot more than we realize when he volunteers a bit of extra life to our farm. For me, every time Rythzon comes to the farm I know that day will be one hundred times more enjoyable. Whether we sharpen tools, harvest vegetables or just weed; being able to share his enthusiasm and curiosity makes me understand the complexity of the interests we have as kids.

I asked Rythzon why he comes to volunteer on the farm and he said “for the fun of it!” That comment really encompassed, in full, how bright and willing he is. He has had experience growing vegetables like corn and kale in the past. He loves the opportunity to be on the farm and to be learning the little things we are all so excited to share, with his favorite being our harvest days. When he is not on the farm he enjoys all- American baseball, hanging out with friends, the occasional video game, and especially being outdoors, like spending time out on the lake.

Rythzon Thank you so much for all you do for the farm, but especially for reminding us all how special life is. What you do really does make a difference, and you sharing with us your personality and strengths really help us all appreciate the truths, dreams and lives of our kids.

What you might see in your next box

chard
kale
red cabbage
zucchini
tomatoes
peppers
pac choi
beans
basil
cucumbers

A jungle of trellised tomatoes

Nate holding two very large broccoli heads