CABBAGE, 12 WAYS

I’ve made suggestions for which type of cabbage to use in which recipes, but you should feel free to substitute. No matter what kind of cabbage you buy, look for tightly packed heads; they should feel heavy for their size and not have any loose or yellowing leaves.

To shred cabbage, cut the head into quarters, slice out the hard white core, and cut crosswise into thin strips (to shred napa cabbage, just cut the whole thing crosswise). Whatever method you use to shred cabbage for coleslaw (maybe you have one of those old-fashioned wooden graters) will work here. These recipes should serve four generously.

BRAISED

1. Unstuffed Cabbage
Sauté 1 pound ground beef, 1 chopped onion, and 1 chopped carrot in 2 tablespoons olive oil until browned. Add chopped leaves of 1 small savoy cabbage (about 6 cups), 1/4 cup raisins, and a pinch of cinnamon. Cover and cook until the cabbage wilts, then add a 28-ounce can of whole tomatoes (with juice) and 1/2 cup stock. Simmer, partly covered, until the cabbage is tender and the sauce thickens. Garnish: parsley.

2. Curry
Use green cabbage. Substitute chicken thigh chunks for beef; 1 tablespoon each minced garlic, ginger, and fresh chile for carrot; 1 tablespoon curry powder for cinnamon; and 15 ounces coconut milk for tomatoes. Garnish: cilantro and lime.

3. Sausage and Beer
Substitute chunks of kielbasa for ground beef, butter for olive oil (skip the carrot). Use red cabbage. Skip the raisins, cinnamon, and tomatoes, and substitute 1 to 2 cups of beer, plus 1/4 to 1/2 cup cider, red wine, or sherry vinegar for the stock.

RAW

4. Thai Style
Put about 12 cups shredded napa cabbage in a large bowl with 1/2 cup chopped peanuts and 1 cup chopped mint. Combine 3 tablespoons fish sauce, 1 to 2 tablespoons
rice vinegar, 1 tablespoon neutral oil, 1 tablespoon brown sugar, the juice of 1 lime, and some minced fresh hot chile to taste; whisk to dissolve the sugar. Add the dressing to the cabbage and toss.

5. Apples and Bacon
Substitute red cabbage for napa, walnuts for peanuts, and a sliced green apple for mint. Skip the Thai flavors. Crisp 4 ounces chopped bacon in olive oil. Stir in 1 tablespoon Dijon, chopped shallot, and lots of pepper; toss with cabbage.

6. Cabbage Caesar
Forget everything but the cabbage. Rub the bowl with a garlic clove; add 1 egg yolk, a few chopped anchovies, 1/2 cup grated Parmesan, the juice of 1 lemon, 6 tablespoons olive oil, and salt and pepper. Whisk; add the cabbage and toss.

SOUP

7. Hot and Sour
Bring 8 cups chicken stock to a boil with 2 tablespoons each minced garlic and fresh ginger. Add 8 ounces sliced fresh shiitakes and 5 cups shredded napa cabbage; cook until softened, 5 minutes. Add 3 tablespoons soy sauce, 1/4 cup rice vinegar, 1 cup tofu cubes, and black pepper. Cook 3 to 4 minutes. Garnish: chopped fresh cilantro, scallions.

8. Pho
Use napa cabbage. Add 1 cinnamon stick, 4 cloves, and 4 pieces star anise. Substitute 8 ounces thinly sliced beef for shiitakes, fish sauce for soy, lime juice for vinegar, and 4 ounces soaked rice noodles for tofu. Garnish: cilantro, mint, sliced chiles.

9. Beans and Ham
Keep the stock, skip the rest. Brown 8 ounces chopped ham and 1 chopped onion in olive oil. Add the stock and 3 cups cooked white beans; bring to a boil. Add green cabbage and some thyme; simmer until tender. Garnish: Parmesan.

STIR-FRIED

10. Shrimp and Mushrooms
Put 3 tablespoons neutral oil in a large skillet over high heat. When hot, add 1 tablespoon each minced garlic and fresh ginger, and cook for 15 seconds; add 1 small
shredded napa cabbage and 8 ounces sliced mushrooms; cook, stirring, until soft and slightly brown, 5 minutes. Add 8 ounces shrimp and cook until pink, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and stir soy sauce to taste. Garnish: scallions.

11. *Pork and Peanuts*
Use napa cabbage. Brown 8 ounces ground pork in the oil before adding the garlic and fresh ginger. Skip the mushrooms and shrimp (add a handful of peanuts when you’d add the shrimp, and cook until lightly toasted). Garnish: scallions.

12. *Egg and Tomato*
Use napa cabbage; skip the mushrooms and shrimp. Once the cabbage is soft, push it to one side of the pan, add more oil, and scramble 2 or 3 eggs in the empty spot until firm. Stir in 1 cup chopped tomatoes. Garnish: scallions and soy.