

Cabbage

Many of the healing

by Ros Ben-Moshe

properties of cabbage are due to its abundant sulphur content. It cools the digestive system, thereby improving digestion, and is used by many cultures to beautify the skin.

The cabbage family (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata*) is no exception, and includes white cabbage, red cabbage and yellow and green savoy cabbage. It has been cultivated in the West for over 4,000 years. Due to its warming thermal nature, amongst many other properties, many naturopaths consider it to be one of the greatest healers of the vegetable kingdom and has often been referred to as 'the medicine of the poor'.

Not only can cabbage be served in an array of tantalising dishes it is useful both internally and externally, and has historically provided many positive healing remedies. For example, the application of slightly crushed cabbage leaves to gangrenous wounds brought healing, in some instances alleviating the need for surgery or amputation. Cabbage leaves can be externally applied to any part of the body which is inflamed, and if bound firmly and left overnight will draw out toxins, and cool and heal the inflamed area. This method was used in ancient times by Greek and Roman physicians such as Galen, Hippocrates and Pliny.

Cabbage owes many of its healing properties to its abundant sulphur content. It cools the digestive system, thereby improving digestion, and is used by many cultures to beautify the skin. 'It is also used for treating constipation, the common cold, whooping cough (cabbage soup or tea), frostbite (body-temperature wash of cabbage tea), mental depression and irritability, (and) helps rid the digestive system of worms and parasites', with a mixture of cabbage and garlic.

Researchers have recently found in cabbage vitamin U, which is believed to be responsible for its many healing properties. One of its most effective internal applications over centuries has been as a treatment for digestive ulcers. It continues to be helpful in a range of intestinal disorders including irritable bowel syndrome and ulcerative colitis.

When eaten and simultaneously used as a poultice (bandage) it can treat skin eruptions, leg ulcers, varicose veins, arthritis and wounds. Cabbage also has the ability to loosen mucus in the respiratory system,

thereby making it easier to expel. This property is useful to remember during the cough and cold season.

It is even said that eating cabbage regularly helps overcome cold feet, something that I am keen to experiment with. Cabbage juice, or even soup, is one of the best forms of treating many of these conditions. It is also considered to be useful for inflammations of the bladder where symptoms range from burning, discharge or difficulty in urination, to in men, calming an inflamed prostate. All this from a vegetable that many simply associate with flatulence!

Another reason to hit the cabbage when you feel a cold coming in is that it is richer in vitamin C than oranges. It contains iodine, and its outer darker leaves are high in vitamin E and contain at least a third more calcium than the inner lighter coloured leaves. 'Cabbage in the form of a raw sauerkraut is excellent for cleansing and rejuvenating the digestive tract, improving the intestinal flora and treating difficult cases of constipation'.

Chinese (napa) cabbage, as distinct from the round head 'European' varieties, has a cooling, rather than a warm thermal nature. It also has many healing properties, and is useful in the treatment of many kinds of inflammations, yellow mucus discharges and all other ailments that have heat symptoms. Chinese cabbage is also useful in the treatment of constipation, as it helps moisten the intestines. It contains only 20 per cent of the sulphur of the round head varieties. Something to bear in mind if one's digestive system is not quite what it could be.

Of the round head varieties, red and white cabbage share most of the same properties, however white cabbage has slightly better anti-inflammatory properties while red cabbage tends to be more strengthening to the blood.

Belonging to the wider cabbage family and sharing similar properties are brussels sprouts, broccoli and spring greens. It is interesting to note that the high chlorophyll content of a richly-green broccoli helps counteract gas formation resulting from its high sulphur content.

The cabbage family tends to be known as a 'flatulent' family of vegetables. A useful tip to reduce gas formation is to lightly cook rather than stew its products.

Generally speaking, for a good nutritional value, cabbage should either be eaten raw or cooked lightly. It is comforting to note that cabbage has even more traditional recipe applications than it does health properties. Cabbage can be served in different guises and can be devoured with glee even by those who are not its big fans, my three-year-old son included! It can be eaten raw, cooked, steamed, fried, or also as a juice.

Chef's notes:

All recipes below are wheat, sugar and dairy free, except for the optional sauce for the cabbage rolls. Obviously the choice is yours whether you would like to substitute some of the ingredients. For example, I have suggested mayonnaise, but you can prefer yoghurt, however the two are easily interchangeable.

Seeds are tastier if they are lightly toasted before adding to dishes. It helps kill off mould which can be a problem for Candida sufferers. This rule applies to nuts. Dried fruit should be soaked in weak tea or boiling water for a good 10 minutes to remove unwanted moulds and excess sugars.



It never ceases to amaze me how much goodness can be reaped from each and every vegetable. We have available to us a veritable natural pharmacy with many of the most commonly served vegetables providing us with essential minerals, vitamins and even cures for assorted ailments.



Cabbage Rolls

Photo: Robbi Newman

Cabbage rolls

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|---|---|
| 8 medium sized cabbage leaves | 1 clove garlic, crushed |
| 1 cup brown rice | 1-2 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped |
| 1 cup brown lentils | 1 tablespoon oil for frying |
| 1 medium sized onion, chopped | sea salt and ground black pepper to season |
| $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mushrooms, finely chopped | |
| 1 tablespoon tomato paste | |

Rolls

Steam the cabbage for about five minutes. Remove the coarse central stalk. Boil the rice together with the lentils for 20-30 minutes or until tender. Heat oil in saucepan and fry onions until translucent. Add garlic, mushrooms, tomato paste, parsley, salt and pepper and saute for about 10 minutes. Transfer rice and lentil mixture to a large bowl and add fried vegetables. Mix together thoroughly. Place heaped spoons full of the mixture in the centre of each cabbage leaf and roll up carefully and firmly, sealing sides first. Place cabbage rolls into well-greased baking dish and cover with tomato sauce. Cover and bake for 30-40 minutes.

Sweet & sour cabbage and apple soup

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| $\frac{3}{4}$ cup tomato juice (equivalent to 1 tablespoon tomato puree in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water) | 2 large apples, finely chopped |
| 7 cups water or vegetable stock | 1 large onion, finely chopped |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ small white cabbage, finely chopped | sea salt and ground black pepper to season |
| | 1 lemon, juice of |
| | 1 teaspoon honey |

Bring to boil in a large saucepan the tomato juice and vegetable stock. Add cabbage, apple and onion. Reduce heat to simmer and cook for about 1 hour or until cabbage is tender. Season with salt and pepper. Add juice of lemon and the honey for an unusual taste sensation. Serve hot.

Cabbage roll sauce:

- 1 tablespoon safflower oil
- 1 large onion diced
- 1 teaspoon crushed garlic
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- pepper to taste
- 2 cups of water
- 2 tablespoon rice honey
- 2 tablespoon brown rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 tablespoon shoyu
- 2 tablespoon of wholemeal flour

Heat oil in pan and saute onion, garlic, ginger and pepper till onions are lightly browned. Add water, rice honey, vinegar, lemon juice and shoyu. Simmer a few minutes then stir in flour to thicken. Cook another few minutes.

Optional sauce

- 4 large tomatoes, chopped
- 1 medium sized onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon fresh basil, finely chopped
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon oil for frying
- sea salt and ground black pepper to season

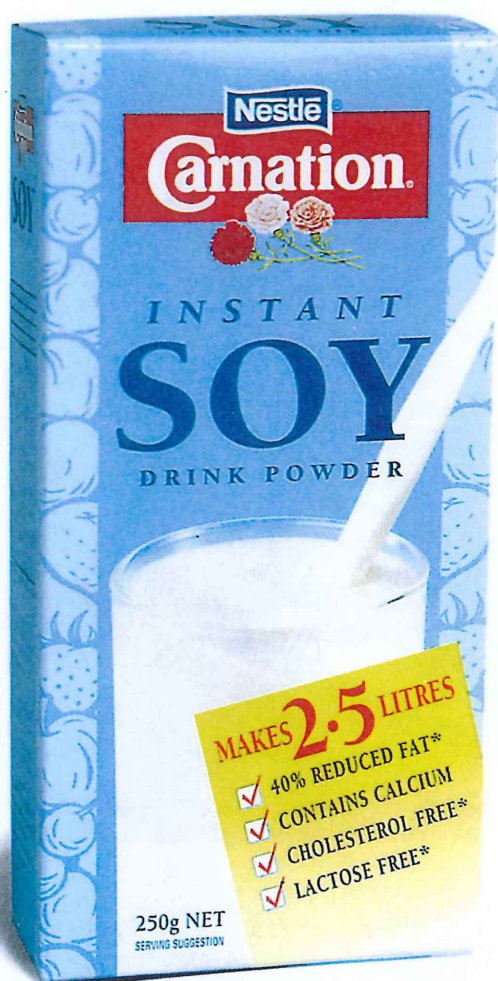
In a large saucepan heat oil. Fry onion, tomatoes, tomato paste, salt and pepper. Bring to boil then reduce heat to a simmer and cook for approximately 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Preheat oven to 180 degrees C or 350 degrees F.

Red cabbage and orange salad

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| $\frac{1}{2}$ small red cabbage, shredded | 2 teaspoons freshly chopped mint |
| 2 oranges, diced | For dressing: |
| 2 tablespoons (toasted) sunflower seeds | 2 tablespoons olive oil |
| 1 tablespoon (toasted) sesame seeds | 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar or 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice |
| $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sulphur-free sultanas (optional) | ground black pepper |

Combine all salad ingredients. In a screw-top jar mix dressing ingredients. Shake well then add to salad. Toss well, cover and chill.

Cont.



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Cabbage

Cabbage nori rolls

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| 6-8 toasted nori sheets | 1 carrot, cut into thin sticks |
| 1 small white cabbage | 1 teaspoon toasted |
| 1 cucumber, cut into thin sticks | sesame seeds |
| ½ cup pickled daikon radish, cut into thin sticks | 1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger |
| | 1 tablespoon tamari |

Quarter cabbage lengthwise, cut into thin wedges and lightly steam for about 3 minutes. Remove cabbage and drain excess juice. A good way of doing this is with a bamboo mat. Mix cabbage with sesame seeds, ginger and tamari then place on a sheet of nori on a bamboo mat or a thick cloth napkin. Arrange a narrow row of carrot, cucumber and radish on top of the cabbage mixture. Using a pastry brush, brush the edge of the nori furthest from you with water then firmly roll on the mat. Place the rolled up nori seam down and cut with a sharp knife into 3cm rolls.

NB: Don't discard outer leaves. They are a very rich source of all sorts of vitamins and minerals. They make an excellent 'crispy seaweed' substitute.

Crispy seaweed

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| 4-6 cabbage leaves, finely shredded | ¼ cup flaked almonds, toasted |
| vegetable oil for deep frying | ¼ cup sulphur-free sultanas, finely chopped |

Remove coarse inner stem from leaves. Finely shred leaves and place on paper towels to dry. Heat oil on a wok or a deep fryer. Remove from heat and place a portion of the leaves in oil. Return to heat and deep-fry until the leaves begin to float to the surface and become crinkled and translucent. Remove from oil with a slatted spoon and drain on paper towels. Fry each batch in this manner until all leaves are cooked. Add toasted flaked almonds and chopped sultanas. Mix and serve.

Sauteed cabbage with potatoes

Serves 4

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| 2 large potatoes, peeled and cut into even sized chunks | ½ teaspoon turmeric |
| 1 small white cabbage, finely chopped | 1 tablespoon tahini |
| 1 cup pumpkin, grated | sea salt |
| ½ teaspoon curry powder | freshly ground black pepper |
| | 1 tablespoon oil, for frying |

Steam/boil potatoes until almost tender. Heat oil in a wok. Add curry powder and turmeric in the pan and lightly toast to release aromas. Add grated pumpkin and stir-fry for 3 minutes. To this add potatoes, cabbage, tahini, sea salt and pepper. Depending on the thickness of the tahini you may want to add 1-2 tablespoons water. Stir fry for 3 or so minutes or until flavours have permeated all vegetables. This dish has a very rich taste that can be eaten on its own or on a bed of brown rice.

Basic coleslaw

Serves 6

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| ½ white cabbage, shredded | ½ cup mayonnaise |
| 2 carrots, grated | ground black pepper |
| 1 small onion, minced or very finely chopped | 1 tablespoon lemon juice |

Combine all ingredients well. Cover and refrigerate until required.

References available

Ros Ben-Moshe is currently writing a vegetarian wholefood cookbook with an emphasis on food allergies and intolerances.