

## CABBAGE CRAVINGS

JeanMarie Brownson  
Chicago Tribune

Even this deep into winter, I still crave the flavors coaxed from winter vegetables. Root vegetables, such as turnips and parsnips, easily transform into roasted sides, soups and mashes. Potatoes offer exquisite comfort in any form. Cabbage, one of the world's most versatile vegetables, single-handedly eliminates boredom in the kitchen and at the table.

A recent trip to a large supermarket revealed more than a half-dozen types of cabbage — from simple tight green heads to burgundy wine-colored orbs, to curly edged savoy to the oblong head of pale napa cabbage. To say nothing of its family members including Brussels sprouts, collards, kale, turnips, radishes, broccoli and cauliflower. The cruciferous family also includes such wonders as arugula, bok choy and watercress.

When I plopped down an overflowing shopping bag, my husband flinched. He questioned the number of heads lined up on the counter and my ability to make something a non-cabbage-lover would enjoy. As well as pleasant aromas to fill a house we rarely leave. Challenge accepted.

Where to start? A skillet full of shredded green cabbage sauteed with bacon and onions always reminds me of a ski trip with a chef friend; her dish is now a family standard. My paternal grandmother's red cabbage, cooked with chopped apple, sugar, vinegar and raisins, makes me sentimental for large family gatherings. Ditto for her labor-intensive cabbage strudel. Mushroom and sauerkraut pierogi, made by our baby sitter, proved a hit with our kids when they were young.

This winter, I'm looking for big, bold flavors to perk up spirits. A cabbage and red chile stir-fry I enjoy often during business lunches at a Szechwan restaurant in Houston comes to mind. Tongue-tingling Szechwan peppercorns and lots of hot chile oil flow over very crunchy cabbage leaves.

At home, I re-create the dish with the lacy-edged savoy cabbage and the Chinese condiment known as spicy chile crunch (or spicy chile crisp). I serve the spicy cabbage as a side to roast chicken and as a meatless main over steaming hot jasmine rice topped with plenty of roasted peanuts.

Our friends from Mielec, Poland, introduced us to bigos, a hearty, tangy, satisfying dish suited for cold winter nights. Some version of this pork and cabbage stew is enjoyed throughout Poland, where it is considered the national dish.

Dried mushrooms and tomato paste (or, often, dried plums) add to the dish's umami flavor. That is the taste sensation that keeps us coming back for more — kind of like a cheesy snack cracker. It's one reason I love the dish — that and the sauerkraut. Yes, sauerkraut.

Set judgment aside. The long, slow cooking and the juices from browned pork, render the



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Pork simmers in a Dutch oven or slow cooker with cabbage and sauerkraut. Kielbasa is added near the end of cooking.

kraut and the fresh cabbage, into melted goodness.

Take time to source sauerkraut naturally fermented simply with salt — not vinegar and certainly not laced with preservatives. There are plenty of choices these days due to sauerkraut's popularity with raw and probiotic fans, including Farmhouse Culture, Cleveland Kraut and Cultured Love. Trader Joe's has a refrigerated sauerkraut with sliced pickles in it that is delicious in the recipe that follows.

At home, give the sauerkraut a taste and rinse it under cold running water if it is too salty or tangy for you. Seasoned sauerkraut, purchased from a delicatessen counter, works well in the stew.

My rendition of the classic Polish stew varies depending on what's on hand — sometimes I skip the sauerkraut and use all fresh cabbage. Just as often, I substitute smoked chicken for the smoked pork.

Cabbage is low in calories and has high nutritional value, including vitamin C and K and glutamine (an amino acid with anti-inflammatory properties). It's also versatile enough to prevent kitchen boredom for the cook as well as for her eaters — even the doubting husband.

### CABBAGE AND CHILE CRISP STIR-FRY

Prep: 10 minutes  
Cook: 10 minutes  
Makes: 4 servings

I like the Lao Gan Ma brand of spicy chile crisp imported from China; Trader Joe's version tastes good and does not contain preservatives. Chinese black bean garlic sauce, Indonesian

sambal oelek and Moroccan harissa sauces work well here, too. Just know your penchant for heat and add the sauce judiciously to start.

- 1 small head (about 2 pounds) savoy or green cabbage or napa cabbage**
- 1/4 cup spicy chile crisp or Chinese black bean garlic sauce or sambal oelek or harissa**
- 1 tablespoon each: soy sauce, unseasoned rice vinegar**
- 1 teaspoon dark sesame oil**
- 4 large cloves garlic, crushed**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil for high heat cooking (not olive oil)**
- Chopped fresh cilantro**
- 1/2 cup chopped roasted salted peanuts, optional**
- Cooked jasmine rice, optional**

1. Cut cabbage in half and remove core. Cut into quarters. Cut each quarter into large chunks. You will have about 8 generous cups. Mix chile crisp, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil and garlic in a small dish.
2. Heat a very large deep, nonstick skillet (or use 2 smaller skillets) over medium until a drop of water sizzles on contact. Add vegetable oil and cabbage. Using a splatter guard, cook, stirring often, until cabbage is bright green and crisp-tender, 6 to 8 minutes. (Napa cabbage will cook the fastest; green cabbage will take the longest. Taste a piece to determine the texture you'll enjoy.)
3. Stir in chile crisp mixture. Cook and stir to coat the cabbage well, about 1 minute. Transfer to a large serving platter. Sprinkle with cilantro and peanuts, if using. Serve with rice, if you like.

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**NUTRITION: IT'S ALL GOOD**  
ANN BLOOM

## Gardening is good for you in so many ways

Although the snow, frozen ground and ice tell a different story, spring and warmer weather are just weeks away and with the change in weather come thoughts of gardens, warm soil and fresh vegetables. Seed catalogs are already flooding mailboxes and gardeners of all types — from beginning to the very experienced — are beginning to plan their 2021 garden.

Gardening has many benefits, health and otherwise. Gardening is a way to get some of the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day for adults and youth. Raking, weeding and hauling hoses gets the heart's rate up. Working outside is relaxing and can help with depression and aids with sleep.

A garden is also a source of fresh produce during the summer months and beyond. Produce can be preserved through freezing, drying or canning. Some vegetables that lend themselves well to freezing are green beans, broccoli and corn. Many vegetables can also be dried for use in soups in the fall and winter. Herbs also dry well (and quickly) using a food dehydrator or just left on the counter. Fruits dry well and can be made into fruit leathers for healthy snacks. Tomatoes and other vegetables are also able to be preserved through canning using either a water bath canning method or a pressure canner.

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**BETWEEN THE ROWS**  
WENDY SCHMIDT

## The tropics in your own living room

Palm trees can generally be of two types: fan palms and feather palms. That classification is made due to the form of their leaves. It seems odd to be writing about tropical and semi-tropical plants in the middle of a whiteout or blizzard, but you may have a palm tree as a houseplant. Palms give your home a rather tropical feeling.

Big date palms are Phoenix dactylifera. They're common in Indio, California — you don't have to travel to the Middle East to purchase dates fresh from the tree, but you have to go south a ways to at least semi-tropical climates.

Some palm trees can live in temperate climates. You will possibly see a palm tree as landscape or street tree in Seattle or Portland, for instance. They'll tolerate short duration frosts, but if freezing occurs in the crown it may kill the whole tree.

Potted palms make good houseplants. They won't tolerate extremely dark areas of the house, but they're slow-growing and so may not outgrow pot or space for many years. They grow more slowly in pots, but if you need to repot them use a pot only a little larger than the one they've been growing in.

Palms mix well with other plants such as broadleaf evergreens. Use good potting soil and a pot with good drainage. Water adequately. Palms are useful near a pool as they don't shed leaves. They're good understory trees. Fertilize potted palms regularly. Groom them by removing the lower dead leaves to make them more attractive.

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## Foster home need greater than ever

One harsh reality of the pandemic often goes unnoticed: the continued need for foster parents.



**ADAM RODAKOWSKI**

Similar to many regions across the state, Eastern Oregon faces a critical shortage of foster homes for youth in need. Unlike many other areas, however, these rural and frontier communities have a history of joining together to address complex challenges facing their most vulnerable populations. We don't see it as an "agency" problem to fix but rather find support through community collaborations and from the care of foster families.

In Oregon, an average of 7,345 children are in foster care on a daily basis, according to state data from 2019. Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. (GOBHI) is a foster care program that provides homes for youth in local communities involved in the child welfare system or for those youth being supported by their local community mental health program. Our agency certifies foster families and works in partnership with the Oregon Department of Human Services Child Welfare to provide additional support services to youth and our foster families.

The ongoing need for foster families is well-known. How-

ever, the pandemic has increased uncertainty for both youth in foster care, and foster families. Despite this challenge, the people caring for foster youth are making remarkable accomplishments in the lives of youth every day. These families make lifelong positive impacts on the youth they serve, and are crucial to the success of our communities.

I'm honored to work with and support our foster families. Whether the child they serve stays with them for a few days or becomes a permanent member of the family, foster families have the unique ability to be the stable, supportive adults during a challenging time in the life of a child.

That leads us to the common question: How does the system work? GOBHI is licensed by the state of Oregon to certify and provide homes for youth in local communities who are involved in the child welfare system, or are receiving care from their local community mental health program. We certify homes for children and teens ages 4 to 17. In 2019, we certified 54 homes in 18 counties.

GOBHI's Therapeutic Foster

Care program is a higher level of service and support than you would find through traditional foster care. We empower foster families to provide a safe environment that supports a healing process for our youth. Foster families receive training and ongoing support to help them create that type of environment. Training topics include Trauma Informed Care, de-escalation techniques, working with biological families, cultural awareness, and evidence-based parenting practices. Each family receives an assigned case manager to support them and the youth in their home. Our team is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide support and guidance.

Help doesn't stop at the case management level. Foster Plus is a 10-social service agency collaboration. Its purpose is to connect kids in need with the support and stability of committed, caring foster families. GOBHI leads this collaborative group dedicated to increasing the number of safe foster homes and supports other agencies to improve services to children.

The positive impact that a foster parent can have on a child lasts a lifetime. We often hear stories of children who may have spent less than six months in a foster home but later in life

contacted their foster parent to express their gratitude.

"Deciding to be a foster parent was rather scary for us. Now I can say, I wouldn't trade it for anything else. I've seen such a difference in their life, and also in ours. The GOBHI team was right there along the way and that's exactly the type of support we needed," a foster parent said.

If you have wanted to find a way to help children — especially those children in your own community — this is a way to do so. You will be ensuring that all kids in Eastern Oregon know they are wanted and safe during a very scary time in their lives.

If you have even considered fostering, please reach out. There are two options for people looking to become a foster parent:

- Full time — a child may reside in your home for 6-24 months.
  - Part time — children will reside in your home for 2-14 days.
- Everyone can help in ways small and large. We welcome anyone who's ready to make a change.

Adam Rodakowski is the director of Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc.'s Therapeutic Foster Care program. Patrick Mulvihill, GOBHI communications coordinator, also contributed to this column.