Cabbage

Cabbage is a member of the Brassica family, closely related to broccoli, brussels sprouts, collards, kale and cauliflower. Cabbage comes in a variety of shapes and colors, including red, purple, white and green; and its leaves can be either crinkled or smooth. In Skagit Valley, much of the cabbage grown is used for seed or sauerkraut. There's an old Pennsylvania Dutch tradition that says eating sauerkraut on New Year's Day will bring good luck, so check out the sauerkraut prep methods to try your luck at good eating.

Nutrition

Cabbage, a powerhouse of nutrition, is a good source of Vitamin C, vitamin K, and iron. Cabbage is known as a Cruciferous vegetable and contains many different antioxidants that have been shown to reduce chronic inflammation.

Selection

Choose only high-quality fresh cabbage. There should be no wilted leaves or visible spoilage. Select firm, solid, clean and mature heads. Some varieties are better suited for long-term storage and/or preservation.

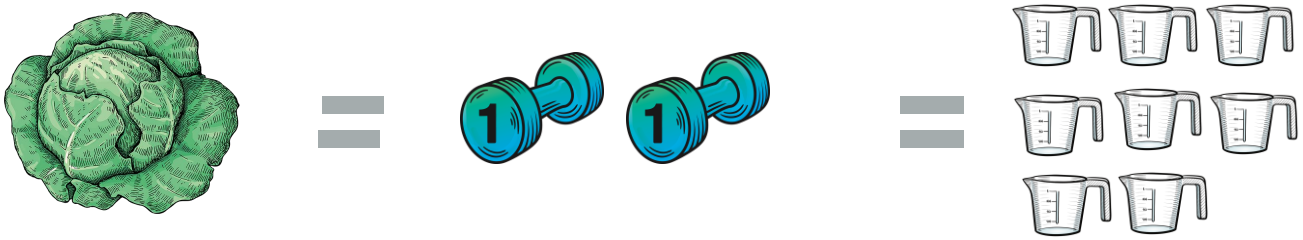
Farmers Markets or local farms may provide access to these varieties as most grocery stores feature cabbage grown for fresh consumption.

To clean cabbage, place it underneath running water. Using your hands or a vegetable scrubber, gently start scrubbing the cabbage. When finished cleaning, pat down dry with a paper towel.

Storage

When purchasing, select heavy, dense, firm cabbage with a shiny appearance. Fresh cabbage may be stored for 2 or more weeks in the refrigerator and is best kept in a perforated plastic bag. You may also store in a root cellar, or other microclimate area with cold moist conditions. Cabbage may last 3-4 months under these conditions.

Measurements



Weight Volume

Freezing

- Trim off coarse outer leaves.
- Cut heads in medium or course shreds or thin wedges or separate heads into leaves.
- Blanch in boiling water for 1 1/2 minutes. Cool immediately in ice water for an equivalent amount of time.
- Pack into moisture-vapor proof freezer containers or freezer weight plastic bags leaving 1/2 inch of headspace.
- Label, seal and freeze .

Note: Frozen or dried cabbage are best when used in cooked dishes. After being frozen or dried, it loses its crispness.

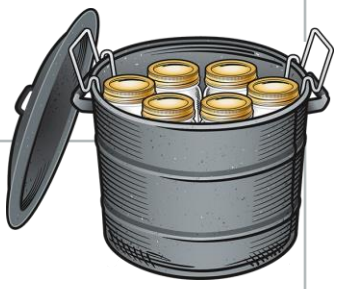
Drying

Preparation: Remove outer leaves. Quarter; cut out core, and shred with the coarse blade of a vegetable grater, about 1/8 inch thick.

Pretreatment: Steam blanch for 2 to 3 minutes. Drain well.

Drying Procedure:

- Arrange in single layers on drying trays. Cabbage becomes packed on the trays during drying, so spread it evenly and not more than 1/2 inch deep.
- Dry at 140°F for 10-12 hours or until crisp, no moist areas remain.
- Cool thoroughly. Package dried cabbage in moisture/vapor proof containers. Label. Store in a cool, dark, dry place.



Boiling Water Canning

There are no processing times available from the USDA for cabbage, with the exception of sauerkraut.

Sauerkraut

Sauerkraut is a traditional fermented moist cabbage side dish that can be preserved using the boiling water canning process. For the best sauerkraut, use firm heads of fresh cabbage. Start sauerkraut within 24 to 48 hours of harvest. Fall cabbage is higher in moisture and makes the best sauerkraut.

Yield: 5 pounds fresh cabbage will make 2-3 quart jars of finished sauerkraut.

Use the following quantities for each gallon of your container's capacity:

5 pounds cabbage
3 Tablespoons canning or pickling salt

Work with about 5 pounds of cabbage at a time. Discard outer leaves. Rinse heads under cold running water and drain. Cut heads in half and remove cores. Shred or slice to the thickness of a quarter. Put shredded cabbage into an extra-large bowl or food-safe tub, and add salt.

Using clean hands, thoroughly mix in salt until juices are drawn from cabbage and salt is dissolved. Pack firmly into a suitable fermenting container. Repeat shredding, salting, and packing with additional cabbage, if desired. Be sure that the container is deep enough so that its rim is at least 4 or 5 inches above the cabbage.

If juice does not cover cabbage, add boiled and cooled brine (1½ Tablespoons of salt per quart of water).

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Sauerkraut, continued

Add plate and weights, and cover the container with a clean towel or weigh the cabbage down with a brine-filled plastic bag.

Store at 70°F to 75°F during fermentation. At temperatures between 70°F and 75°F, sauerkraut will be fully fermented in 3 to 4 weeks; at 60°F, fermentation may take 5 to 6 weeks. At temperatures lower than 60°F, kraut may not ferment; above 75°F, kraut may become soft.

If you use a plate and jars as weight, check the sauerkraut two or three times each week and remove scum if it forms. If you weigh the cabbage down with a brine-filled plastic bag, you will not need to disturb the crock until normal fermentation is complete (when bubbling ceases).

Fully fermented sauerkraut may be kept tightly covered in the refrigerator for several months, or it can be frozen or canned as directed below.

Hot Pack
Bring sauerkraut and juice to a boil, and pack into hot jars leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust for headspace if needed. Wipe rims, adjust two-piece lids, and process in a boiling water canner according to directions below.

Raw Pack
Fill hot jars with sauerkraut and juices, leaving ½ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust for headspace if needed. Wipe rims with a clean, dampened paper towel, adjust two-piece lids, and process in a boiling water canner according to directions below.

After canning is complete, let cool, undisturbed, for 12 to 24 hours at room temperature hours and check seals. Wipe jars, remove rings, label, and store in cool, dry place.

Processing Directions:

Style of pack	Jar Size	1–1,000 ft	1,001–3000 ft
Hot	Pints	10 minutes	15 minutes
Hot	Quarts	15 minutes	20 minutes
Raw	Pints	20 minutes	25 minutes
Raw	Quarts	25 minutes	30 minutes

Preserve Skagit Crop Sheets describe three food preservation techniques—freezing, drying, and boiling water canning—consistent with USDA Food Preservation and Food Safety recommendations. Pressure canning for low acid foods such as meats and vegetables is not included.

Additional resources and recipes, as well as information on Pressure Canning, can be found on the WSU Skagit Food Preservation Website https://extension.wsu.edu/skagit/fam/food-preservation/
or the National Center for Home Food Preservation https://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html.

WSU EXTENSION Skagit County