



recipe

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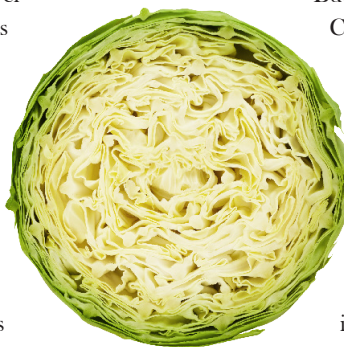
THE

LIMELIGHT

Hold the fridge door open; cabbage has something to say **BY MINDY SCHILLER**

The cabbage is a humble food if I ever saw one. It's one of those vegetables that lays low, at the bottom of the crisper, abandoned because you bought it in a fit of ambition and then forgot about it, covering it with sexier counterparts: eggplant, asparagus, or Brussels sprouts (cabbage's more glamorous cousin, only granted such status because of its place on the Thanksgiving Table and its natural sidekick, the ever-trumping bacon). But it turns out that unassuming cabbage has the last word, because even when you leave it for weeks in the fridge, it's still pretty much usable. Peel off the top few layers and you're good to go. Sure, says the cabbage, walk all over me. Forget me, leave me to dry out at the bottom of your food chain. I will still be there for you. Like your kids, whom you forgot to pick up from school.

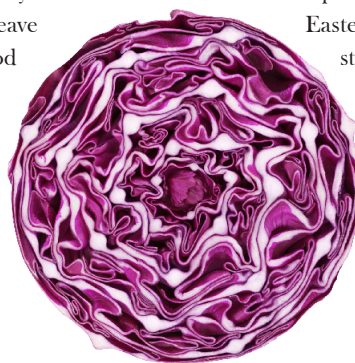
Yup, that's cabbage. The doormat of the vegetable world.



But we overlook it to our detriment. Cabbage is not only one of the more flavorful ingredients out there, it's downright cheap. As in, when you walk past the artichokes and sigh because you just can't stomach spending \$2.89 per globe (especially when you're going to throw away everything but the heart anyway — whoever thought this was a good idea?), you can always rely on your stalwart friend, the cabbage.

In American cuisine, cabbage is mostly hidden behind mayonnaise and sugar in coleslaw-type dishes.

The recipes below — Eastern European and Middle Eastern, respectively — make cabbage the star, using complimentary ingredients to make the cabbage taste more like, well, cabbage. These are humble, peasant dishes. But you know what? They put the artichoke to shame. And you'll learn your lesson: Never overlook the cabbage again.



COURTESY PHOTOS



Haluski

SERVES 6

Haluski is a Slavic dish with counterparts in Hungary, Poland and Romania. When I was growing up, we called it Lukshn mit kroet, Yiddish for "noodles with cabbage." And yes, it really is as simple as that title suggests. There are three basic ingredients: cabbage, onions and egg noodles. Everything else is just a variable to tweak according to your preference. The secret here is the caramelization of the onions, so low and slow is your friend. Don't rush it. Throw the onions in the frying pan and go watch an episode of "House of Cards." When you come back, they'll be perfect.

Ingredients:

About half of a 12-ounce bag of extra wide egg noodles (wide is key; don't use the skinny ones)
 1 small head of green cabbage
 2 onions
 1/2 tablespoon salt, plus more to taste
 pepper, to taste
 6 tablespoons oil, divided

Instructions:

Slice the onion thinly. The more surface area, the more caramelized goodness. Throw it into the frying pan at medium low and let it sit for about 30 minutes. Slice the cabbage, but not as thinly; you don't want mush. When the onions are caramelized, add the cabbage. You might have to add it in stages, depending on the size of the pan. Add the salt, and turn the heat up to medium. The salt makes the cabbage wilt. In a separate pot, boil the noodles using the directions on the package. When the noodles are al dente, drain them and add them to the cabbage mixture. Taste for seasoning and add more salt and pepper according to your taste. Voila — you're done. Simple and delicious.

Note: if you want a heartier meal, start with sliced sausage or other meat instead of the oil. The grease will work even better for sautéing. Alternately, use butter instead. You really can't mess this up.

Cabbage Salad

SERVES 6

In the Middle East, meals are often prefaced by a large spread of colorful salads: Hummus, tomato-and-cucumber, babaghanoush (eggplant), carrot, and cabbage — to name a few. This salad is intensely simple and can be the garnish to an entree (falafel, lamb, fish tacos), or be served as a side dish. Make sure to let the salad marinate for a while before serving. In fact, it gets better with time. You'll wonder how so few ingredients can make such music together.

Ingredients:

1 head purple cabbage
 juice of 2 lemons
 1 teaspoon salt
 dash of pepper
 1/2 teaspoon sugar
 2 tablespoons mayonnaise

Instructions:

First, cut the head into a few manageable chunks to work with. Then, slice the cabbage thinly. Add all of the ingredients together and store in the fridge for at least an hour so the cabbage marinades. When you're ready to serve the salad, mix it, add a dash of salt, and enjoy.