



# Using, Storing and Preserving Cabbage

Prepared by:  
Linda Huyck, MSU Extension educator

*Michigan-grown cabbage is available September through March.*

## Helpful Hints

- Green cabbage is a ball of thick, light-green leaves.
- Red cabbage is a ball of thick, red leaves.
- Chinese cabbage, such as savoy, napa and bok choy, has thinner leaves.

## Storage and food safety

- Wash hands before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Remove any wilted or insect-damaged outside leaves.
- Store cabbage in a plastic bag or wrap in the refrigerator at 41 °F or below.
- Cabbage will stay fresh for several weeks.
- Before using cabbage, cut out core of cabbage with a sharp knife and rinse leaves with cool running water. Drain thoroughly.
- Keep cabbage away from raw meat and meat juices to prevent cross-contamination.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

## Yield

1 medium head =	1 1/4 to 1 1/2 pounds
1 pound =	3 1/2 to 4 1/2 cups of shredded cabbage

## How to preserve

### Canning

Cabbage usually discolors and grows stronger in flavor when canned. Therefore, canning is not recommended unless cabbage is first made into sauerkraut or pickled.

### Freezing

Frozen cabbage and Chinese cabbage are suitable for use only as cooked vegetables. Select freshly picked solid heads. Trim coarse outer leaves from head. Cut into medium to coarse shreds or thin wedges, or separate head into leaves. Water blanch for 1 1/2 minutes. Cool promptly, drain and package, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.



*(See recipe for sauerkraut on the back.)*

## References

How Much Should I Buy? CYFC 064. Michigan State University Extension.

So Easy to Preserve. 2006. University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. Available at <http://setp.uga.edu/>.

Lawn or garden questions?

Visit [migarden.msu.edu](http://migarden.msu.edu).

Call toll-free 1-888-678-3464.

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY | Extension

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Thomas G. Coon, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.

## Recipe

### Sauerkraut (makes about 9 quarts)

**Ingredients:** 25 pounds cabbage  
3/4 cup canning salt

For the best sauerkraut (“kraut”), use firm heads of fresh cabbage, starting between 24 and 48 hours after harvest. Work with about 5 pounds of cabbage at a time. Discard outer leaves. Rinse cabbage heads under cold running water and drain. Cut heads in quarters and remove cores. Shred or slice to a thickness of a 25-cent coin. Put cabbage in a suitable fermentation container. Use stoneware crocks, large glass jars or food-grade plastic containers. **Do not use aluminum, copper, brass, galvanized or iron containers.** Add 3 tablespoons of canning salt per 5 pounds cabbage.

Using clean hands, mix thoroughly. Pack firmly until the salt draws juice from the cabbage. Repeat shredding, salting and packing until all cabbage and salt is in the container. Be sure 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 (1 1/2 tablespoons of salt per quart of water). Weight down the cabbage so that 1 to 2 inches of brine covers it completely. Use a heavy plate or glass lid that fits down inside the container. If you need extra weight, seal a glass jar or jars filled with water and set

on top of the plate or lid. Cover the container with a clean towel. For fermenting, store at 70 to 75 °F. At temperatures between 70 and 75 °F, kraut will be fully fermented in about 3 to 4 weeks; at 60 to 65 °F, kraut may take 5 to 6 weeks. At temperatures lower than 60 °F, kraut may not ferment. Above 75 °F, kraut may become soft. Check the kraut two to three times each week and remove scum if it forms. Store fully fermented kraut tightly covered in the refrigerator for several months, or can as follows:

• **Hot pack method:** In a large pot, bring kraut and liquid slowly to a boil, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and fill jars rather firmly with kraut and liquid, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process in a boiling-water bath. Let jars rest for 24 hours. Check lids to make sure they’re sealed. Remove rings. Wash jars, label, date and store.

• **Raw pack method:** Fill jars firmly with kraut and liquid, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process in a boiling-water bath. Let jars rest for 24 hours. Check lids to make sure they’re sealed. Remove rings. Wash jars, label, date and store.

#### Recommended process times in boiling-water bath canner.

Style of Pack	Jar Size	Under 1,000 ft.	1,001-3,000 ft.	3,001-6,000 ft.	Over 6,000 ft.
Hot pack	Pints	10 min.	15 min.	15 min.	20 min.
	Quarts	15 min.	20 min.	20 min.	25 min.
Raw pack	Pints	20 min.	25 min.	30 min.	35 min.
	Quarts	25 min.	30 min.	35 min.	40 min.

### For more recipes, see:

Complete Guide to Home Canning. (Rev. ed.). 2009. Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Available at [http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications\\_usda.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html).

So Easy to Preserve. 2006. University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. Available at <http://setp.uga.edu/>.