Extension Bulletin HNI09 • Revised July 2023

Michigan Fresh

Using, Storing and Preserving Cabbage

Michigan-grown cabbage is available September through March.

Prepared by:
Linda Huyck, MSU Extension Educator

Revised by:
Kara Lynch, MSU Extension Educator

Michigan Fresh: Using, Storing and Preserving Cabbage was first published in March 2015 and revised in July 2023. The original replaced *WO1045 Food Preservation Series – Cabbage* (MSU Extension, 2006).

Food Safety and Storage

- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- 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	=	1¼ to 1½ pounds
1 pound	=	3½ to 4½ cups of shredded cabbage

How to Preserve

Canning

Cabbage usually discolors and grows stronger in flavor when canned. Therefore, Michigan State University Extension does not recommend canning unless cabbage is first made into sauerkraut or pickled.

Freezing

Cabbage is not ideal for freezing as it becomes limp and develops a color, aroma and flavor that will be "off." 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 1½ minutes. Cool in ice water for 1½ minutes, drain and package, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal, label, date and freeze.

Drying

Cabbage is challenging for drying because of the small size of the leaves. It also absorbs moisture from the air easily and only keeps well if stored at extremely cold temperatures.

References

Michigan State University Extension. (2022). *How much should I buy? A guide to fresh fruits and vegetables for home cooking.* https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/how_much_should_i_buy

National Center for Home Food Preservation. (2016). *Preparing and canning fermented food: Sauerkraut*. https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/sauerkraut.html

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Complete guide to home canning* (Rev. ed.). (Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539). http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html

Find out more about Michigan Fresh at canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh/.

Sauerkraut (makes about 9 quarts)

Ingredients: 25 pounds cabbage
¾ 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 into quarters and remove cores. Shred or slice to a thickness of a 25-cent coin. Put cabbage in a suitable fermentation container (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 (1½ 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 ½-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 ½-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.

See table that follows for recommended processing times

Recipe adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP), *Preparing and Canning Fermented Food: Sauerkraut*, reviewed March 2016 (https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/sauerkraut.html). The NCHFP adapted it from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin, No. 539). USDA, 2015. https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html#gsc.tab=0

Recommended process time **(in minutes) for sauerkraut** in a boiling-water canner.

		Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
Style of pack	**Jar size**	**0 - 1,000 ft**	**1,001 - 3,000 ft**	**3,001 - 6,000 ft**	**Above 6,000 ft**
Hot	Pints	10	15	15	20
	Quarts	15	20	20	25
Raw	Pints	20	25	30	35
	Quarts	25	30	35	40

Let jars sit undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours, check lids to be sure they've sealed, remove rings, wash jars, date, label and store. Food in jars that do not seal must be reprocessed in a clean jar with a new lid within 24 hours, refrigerated or frozen.

Table adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP), *Preparing and Canning Fermented Food: Sauerkraut*, reviewed March 2016 (https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_06/sauerkraut.html). The NCHFP adapted it from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning* (Agriculture Information Bulletin, No. 539). USDA, 2015. https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html#gsc.tab=0