



Give red cabbage a place at the table

My husband and I recently had an unusual pasta dish, and one of the main ingredients was red cabbage. It was delicious. I've never used red cabbage in my own cooking — any tips?

Red cabbage tastes very much like green cabbage, though some say it's a bit more mild and sweet.

The substances that give red cabbage its color, anthocyanins, are well known for their potential health benefits in preventing cancer, inflammation, and other chronic conditions. Red cabbage has at least 36 different types of anthocyanins, according to a 2008 Agricultural Research Service study.

Anthocyanins are also notoriously water-soluble and will bleed in cooking water and can discolor other foods, so keep that in mind when cooking. Cabbage has an abundance of vitamin C, which is also water-soluble — you can lose a lot of it if you cook it in a large amount of water. To retain the most nutrients, use a small amount of liquid and cook red cabbage quickly.

Finding ideas for using red cabbage is as easy as a web search. Some recipes are simple, others more elaborate. For example, the American Institute of Cancer Research recently offered a recipe on its website, <http://www.aicr.org>, "Pork Chops with Braised Red Cabbage, Apple and Cranberries." Take a look and see what you think.

Other tips:

- Select a head of red cabbage that seems heavy for its size.
- Cabbage prefers high humidity; it wilts rapidly in dry storage.
- Before using, remove the core — as in green cabbage, it can be bitter.
- Cooking cabbage releases its sulfur compounds, and overcooking can result in an overbearing, unpleasant odor. Cook red cabbage just until it's tender but still a bit crisp to reduce the pungency.
- Prolonged cooking can also have another effect: According to Harold McGee's classic "On Foods and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen," it can turn red cabbage blue. Cooking red cabbage with apples, red wine vinegar or another acidic ingredient can help retain red cabbage's natural color, but it's also sensitive to trace metals that could be present in the cooking liquid.

Besides being high in anthocyanins and vitamin C, red cabbage is also a great source of fiber, vitamin K, vitamin B6, potassium and manganese, and offers healthy amounts of thiamin, riboflavin, folate, calcium, iron and magnesium. A cup of shredded, boiled red cabbage has just 56 calories.

For more information on cabbage, see the Ohio State University Extension fact sheet, "Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Cabbage," available free online at <http://ohioline.osu.edu>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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