

Cabbage Stuffed with Lentils and Rice

MAKES: 8 to 12 rolls, at least 4 servings

TIME: About 1 hour



Here the cabbage leaves and packages are steamed; this “wet” cooking method makes for a moist and tender dish. You can also braise the cabbage packages in a sauce—see the variation below—or just use vegetable stock. Without the cheese, these rolls are vegan.

Other vegetables you can use: onions, summer squash, chayote, mushrooms, or any sturdy cooking green.

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus a little for garnish if you like

1/2 onion, chopped

2 teaspoons minced garlic

2 cups vegetable stock (pages 101–102), or water

1/2 cup white, brown, or basmati rice

1/2 cup dried lentils

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 medium head white or Savoy cabbage

Gruyère, fontina, Gouda, or mozzarella cheese slices or butter (optional)

Chopped parsley leaves or chives for garnish

1 Put the oil in a medium pot over medium-high heat. When hot, add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until it's soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic

and cook for another minute, then add the stock and bring to a boil.

② If you're using brown rice, add it to the pot along with the lentils. If you're using white or basmati rice, add the lentils and cook them for 5 minutes, then add the rice. Turn the heat to medium-low so that the mixture bubbles gently, cover, and cook until the lentils and rice are tender and the liquid is mostly absorbed (you don't want it completely dry), 25 to 30 minutes. If there is excess liquid, take the cover off, turn the heat to high, and boil it off, being careful not to burn the bottom. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and set aside.

③ Meanwhile, use a thin-bladed sharp knife to cut a cone-shaped wedge out of the bottom of the cabbage, removing its core. Pull off 8 to 12 large, untorn leaves and put in a steamer above a couple inches of salted water. Cover and cook until the leaves are just flexible enough to bend. Make a V-cut in each leaf to remove the tough central stem.

④ To stuff the cabbage leaves, put a leaf, curved side up, on a counter or cutting board. Put $\frac{1}{4}$ cup or so of filling in the center of the leaf, near where you cut off the stem. Fold over the sides, then roll up from the stem end, making a little package; you'll quickly get the hang of it. Don't roll too tightly—the mixture will expand as it cooks. Skewer the rolls with a toothpick or two to hold them together or just put them seam side down. (You

can make the stuffed cabbage to this point up to a day or two in advance; just cover and refrigerate. Bring the rolls to room temperature before proceeding.)

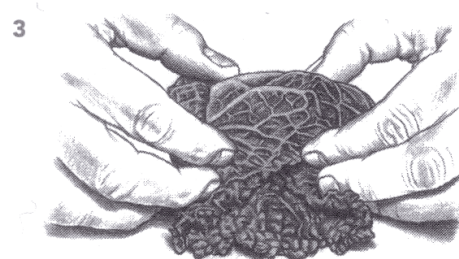
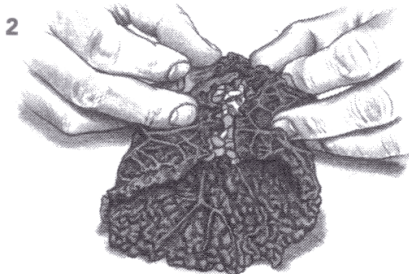
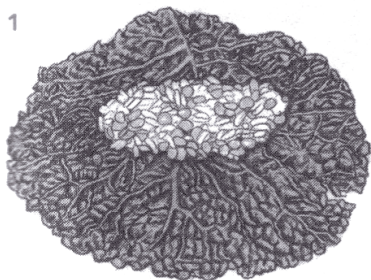
⑤ Put the cabbage packages in the steamer (check that there is enough water) and cook until the cabbage is tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Top with a slice of cheese and run under the broiler until bubbly if you like or drizzle with olive oil or melt a pat of butter on top. Sprinkle with herbs and serve.

Cabbage Stuffed with Lentils and Rice in Red Wine

Sauce. Make a sauce for braising before making the stuffing: Put a tablespoon of olive oil in a deep skillet large enough to hold all the cabbage packages in a single layer over medium-high heat. When hot, add $\frac{1}{2}$ onion, minced, and cook until soft, about 5 minutes; stir in 2 tablespoons tomato paste and cook until rusty brown in color. Add 1 cup red wine, let it cook for a couple minutes, then add 2 cups stock and a couple sprigs fresh thyme; reduce the heat so the sauce bubbles gently. Proceed with the recipe from Step 1. For Step 5, instead of steaming, put the packages in the simmering sauce, cover, and cook until the cabbage is tender (add more stock if the sauce reduces too much).

Cabbage Stuffed with Whole-Grain Bread Salad. A fabulous stuffing—studded with dried figs and dates:

CABBAGE STUFFED WITH LENTILS AND RICE



Stuffing a cabbage or other leaf is much like making a burrito: (STEP 1) Put a not-too-large amount of filling on the third closest to the stem and fold over that end. (STEP 2) Fold in the sides, then (STEP 3) roll it up.