

## ON THE SIDE Beer-Braised Cabbage

Sloppy, smelly cabbage is nobody's idea of good food. We were after a cooked side dish that we'd actually want to eat. BY KRIS WIDICAN

A CREAMY SIDE OF crisp coleslaw is an easy sell, but boiled cabbage—that's another story. Its watery, slimy texture and eye-watering stink (from hours of stewing) earn its well-deserved rap. But recently I came across a dish for beer-braised cabbage that made me think again. To make it, I simmered strips of green cabbage with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of beer in a covered skillet for just 30 minutes. I removed the lid, only to find the cabbage had expelled its liquid and was swimming in sauce. An additional 20 minutes of simmering was necessary to bubble the liquid away, and while the stink was gone and the dish had a pleasing malty flavor, the cabbage was still overcooked and soggy. I had to admit, though, I'd finally found a cooked cabbage dish that piqued my interest.

In my next attempt, I decided to pump up the flavors of the braising liquid before I added the cabbage. For beer, tasters preferred a lighter lager to ale. I tested the addition of various beer-complementing ingredients from the recipes I'd collected. We liked sautéed onion, mustard, vinegar, and thyme. Bacon was surprisingly distracting, and parsley didn't add much.

Once I'd decided on my braising ingredients, I focused on preventing the cabbage from overcooking. I again cooked the cabbage covered, this time checking it after only 10 minutes—it was already tender, so further cooking to evaporate the liquid would certainly result in overcooked cabbage. In my next test, I simmered the

braising liquid until slightly thickened before adding the cabbage. Exactly eight minutes later, I lifted the lid to find crisp-tender shreds of cabbage perked up by a lively, malty, concentrated sauce.

### BEER-BRAISED CABBAGE Serves 4

You can substitute  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of dried thyme for the fresh. Grey Poupon Harvest Coarse Ground Mustard is our favorite whole grain mustard. This hearty side dish is a nice complement for pork.

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup beer, preferably light-bodied lager
- 1 tablespoon whole grain mustard (see note)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon minced fresh thyme
- 1 small head green cabbage (about 1 pound), halved, cored, and sliced thin
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- Salt and pepper

Melt butter in large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook onion until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in beer, mustard, and thyme and simmer until slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Add cabbage and vinegar and cook covered, stirring occasionally, until wilted and tender, about 8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve.



Malty and just tender with a suggestion of mustard, our Beer-Braised Cabbage makes the case for cooked cabbage.