

Alsatian Stuffed Cabbage (Our Way)



Servings: 8 servings

Ingredients for the stuffing

- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter
- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped onions
- 1/2 cup finely chopped shallots
- 1 cup chopped leeks, white and pale green parts
- 1/2 cup finely chopped peeled carrots
- 1/2 cup finely chopped celery
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups fresh breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt or sour cream
- 1 pound ground beef (80% lean)
- 1/4 pound ground veal or pork
- 1/2 pound mild smoked ham or bacon, cut into 1/2-inch dice
- 1/2 pound hot Italian sausages, removed from the casings
- half a large bag of baby spinach wilted with the onions
- 2 large eggs
- 1 large head savoy cabbage (at least 8 inches in diameter and about 2 1/2 pounds)
- butter to butter the dish and the cover to prevent sticking
- 1/2 cup crème fraîche or sour cream (optional)

Directions

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions, shallots, leeks, carrots, celery, thyme and garlic and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and cook until the vegetables are soft and just beginning to colour, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes. At the end throw in the baby spinach to wilt it.

Meanwhile, combine the breadcrumbs and yogurt in a large bowl.

When the vegetables are done, scrape them and any juices into the bowl. Add the beef, veal, bacon, sausages, eggs, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Using a wooden spoon or, better still, your hands, mix the mixture until well blended. (You should have about 8 cups filling.) Set aside in the refrigerator while you prepare the cabbage.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cut an angled circle around the core of the cabbage and remove the core. Discard any outer leaves that are browned or damaged. Peel off the leaves one at a time until you get to the heart. Drop the heart into the boiling water, add several individual leaves to the pot and blanch until the leaves are soft and pliable, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the individual leaves and drain, then continue until all the leaves are blanched. Remove the heart, which should now be fully cooked. Finely chop the cabbage heart and mix it into the stuffing.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

To assemble the stuffed cabbage, generously butter a 4-quart deep stainless steel bowl or rounded casserole (it should be 8 to 9 inches in diameter). We did not use bay leaves this time. Arrange the bay leaves in a four-leaf-clover pattern in the bottom of the bowl. Arrange the 3 or 4 largest cabbage leaves, overlapping, so that they line the bowl with the core ends at the rim of the bowl. Add a second layer of leaves higher so they come out of the bowl and hang over the sides. (enough to be able to drape back over the filling to cover it. Spoon in enough stuffing until the stuffing is used up and/or you are within 1/2 inch of the rim of the bowl. Fold in any cabbage leaves overhanging the edges of the bowl, then cover the top of the stuffing with enough overlapping cabbage leaves to seal in the stuffing, tucking the leaves down the sides of the bowl. Lay the strips of bacon on top of the cabbage in a pinwheel pattern. Pour in about 2 cups of the stock, enough to come to about an inch from the top of the cabbage, adding more stock if needed. (At this point, you can cover and refrigerate the cabbage overnight. If you do this you will need to add 20 minutes to the baking time.)

Place the casserole, covered in the oven at 350F and bake for 2 to 2 1/2 hours, making sure the liquid maintains a simmer; adjust the oven temperature if the heat is too low or too intense. Baste the top of the cabbage with the liquid from time to time and add more stock if needed so that the liquid remains at least halfway up the sides of the bowl. The cabbage is done when the internal temperature reaches 160°F.

Remove the foil and parchment from the cabbage. Handling the bowl with oven mitts or pot holders, pour all the braising liquid into a saucepan and set the cabbage aside to rest for 15 to 20 minutes. Degrease the surface of the liquid and keep warm. You should have at least 2 cups.

To unmold the cabbage, drain any additional liquid into the sauce. Place a large deep platter upside down over the bowl and flip the bowl over to unmold the cabbage. Pour any liquid from the platter into the sauce. Cut the cabbage into wedges with a sharp knife and serve with a spoon of braising liquid and a dollop of sour cream on the side.

We were able to make a bunch of cabbage rolls with the left over stuffing and leaves and then had enough to stuff the cabbage as in the picture.

Cook's Note: *If the savoy cabbage leaves don't come off easily or you use a standard green cabbage, soften the leaves by blanching the whole head to start. Place the head in the boiling water, core side down and simmer for 10 minutes. Spear the core with a large sturdy fork, remove the cabbage from the water and cool under cold running water. Gently peel off as many leaves as you can, one at a time, without tearing them, or if need be, cut them away at the core end to free them. Repeat the process until you get down to the small inner leaves at the heart of the cabbage.*

Level of Difficulty Moderate

Prep Time 1 hour 10 minutes

Cooking time 4-½ hours



Inspiration from Food Republic <http://www.foodrepublic.com/2012/12/13/stuffed-whole-cabbage-recipe#>