

RED CABBAGE



- In 2008, Yuma area producers grew Red Cabbage on about 500 acres, valued at over \$750,000. Red cabbage acreage in the Yuma area was less than its sister crop, green cabbage. The cabbage is grown here as a fresh cut crop and as a colorful addition to the packaged salads produced in the many salad plants in the area.
- Although the Red Cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*) is known as having leaves that are colored dark red or purple, the plant changes its color according to the acidity of the soil. On acidic soils, the leaves grow more reddish while an alkaline soil (as here in Yuma) will produce rather greenish-yellow colored cabbages. This explains the fact that the very same plant is known by different colors in the various regions that it is grown. Furthermore, the juice of red cabbage can be used as a home-made pH indicator, turning red in acid and blue in basic solutions.
- Red cabbage is often used for salads and cole slaw. Ever wonder how cole slaw got its name? Well, COLE is the old English word for cabbage. And we all know that cabbage is the main ingredient of that dish.
- On cooking, red cabbage will normally turn blue. To retain the red color it is necessary to add vinegar or acidic fruit to the pot.
- Red Cabbage stores longer than its "green" relatives and does not need to be converted to sauerkraut to last remain fresh.
- It is the flavonoids in the cabbage that give it its color. Red cabbage has a flavonoid called anthocyanin, which is also found in blueberries and flower petals.
- There are over four hundred different varieties of cabbage to choose from these days, from round to conical in shape, with flat or curly, tight or loose leaves in green, white, red, and purple colors. The most common is the round, light green or white head variety.
- Red and purple cabbages take longer to mature, so these types are generally not as tender as green or green varieties. Most often pickled, raw shredded red cabbage also makes a striking addition to traditional green salads.
- When cooking with red or purple cabbage, be aware that the compound (anthocyanin) that gives the cabbage that beautiful color will also turn it blue when it is cooked along with any alkaline water source, like that found here in the Yuma area. Since Yuma tap water is often full of alkaline minerals, be sure to add about 1 teaspoon of acidic agent, such as lemon juice, vinegar, or wine, to the pot when using tap water. If your red cabbage begins to take on that blue tinge in any recipe, the addition of the acidic agent will usually bring back the original color.

- Less popular vegetables in the cabbage family include arugula, bok choy, Swiss chard, collards, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, rutabaga, turnips, turnip greens, Brussels sprouts, and watercress.
- Cabbage is a rich source of fiber, iron, vitamin A and vitamin C. It's high in fiber and very low in sodium. Eating vegetables from the cabbage family can boost the body's resistance to disease. These vegetables contain natural chemical compounds that may be helpful in the prevention of certain types of cancer, especially colorectal cancer. It's also great food for dieters because it gives a feeling of fullness, yet it's very low in calories. A cup of shredded raw cabbage contains just 24 calories!
- Cabbage is very versatile. It can be shredded and eaten raw in a salad such as coleslaw or cooked for a simple but tasty side dish. Cabbage leaves can be wrapped around a hearty filling for delicious stuffed cabbage. Sauerkraut is cabbage that has been pickled.
- Savoy cabbage, originating in Italy, has crinkly leaves and is considered the most tender and sweet. It is the better choice for stuffed cabbage leaves since the leaves are more pliable and stand up better to longer cooking times.
- Red cabbage can be used for kitchen science experiments. The purple leafy vegetable is considered an indicator, which can be used to distinguish between acids and bases. Red cabbage can also be used as a natural dye for cloth or food.
- The odor that it emits comes from the sulphur content of cabbage which helps the body to resist infection and protects the protoplasm of the cells. It is said to aid in producing glossy hair.
- The anthocyanins found in red cabbage are a group of healthful compounds that fall within the flavonoid class of plant nutrients. ARS scientists have identified 36 anthocyanins in red cabbage, including eight that had never before been detected in the cabbage.
- The cabbage family is a large extended family. There are dozens of varieties of cabbage, but it also belongs to the family of cruciferous vegetables, *brassica oleracea*, which includes, kale, broccoli, collards, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and kohlrabi. Within the cabbage group are the tightly headed red and green cabbages, the longer, looser Savoy and Napa cabbages. Bok choy is one of the most nutritious of the family.
- One of the oldest known vegetables, the cabbage seems to always have been with us. It grew both East and West, though the early cabbage was a weedy, loose-leafed plant. The firm head that we know today was a later development, most closely resembling kale, to which it is related. This was called wild cabbage, and is still called sea cabbage by the French.
- The more vibrant the color of the vegetable, the more nutrients are packed into the package of produce. Think of the rich dark greens of spinach, broccoli or kale, while butternut squash and carrots represent the bright orange family.

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