

## Green Cabbage



In 2008 Yuma County producers grew over 1200 acres of cabbage valued at over \$9 million, most packed in 45 pound cartons.

The cabbage, *Brassica oleracea*, is a plant of the Family Brassicaceae. It is a herbaceous biennial with leaves that form a compact head. The cabbage is derived from a leafy wild mustard plant, native to the Mediterranean region. It was known to the ancient Greeks and Romans and was praised for its medicinal properties, declaring that "it is first of all the vegetables".

Cabbage was developed by ongoing artificial selection for suppression of its internode length or the distance between leaves on its stem.

The only part of the plant that is normally eaten is the leafy head and the spherical cluster of immature leaves. The so-called 'cabbage head' is widely consumed — raw, cooked, or preserved — in a great variety of dishes.

Cabbages keep well and were thus a common winter vegetable before refrigeration and long-distance shipping of produce.

Sturdy, abundant and inexpensive, cabbage is a longstanding dietary staple throughout the world, widely cultivated and stores so well that it is available throughout the year.

Compared with women who ate only one serving or less of cabbage per week during adolescence, those who ate four or more servings were 72% less likely to develop breast cancer as adults.

There are three major types of cabbage: green, red and Savoy. The color of green cabbage ranges from pale to dark green while red cabbage has leaves that are either crimson or purple with white veins running through. Both green and red cabbage have smooth textured leaves. The leaves of Savoy cabbage are more ruffled and yellowish-green in color.

Because cabbage's inner leaves are protected from the sunlight by the surrounding leaves, they are oftentimes lighter in color. Red and green cabbage varieties have a more defined taste and crunchy texture as compared to Savoy cabbage's more delicate nature.

Cabbage has a long history of use both as a food and a medicine. It was developed from a wild cabbage, a vegetable that was closer in appearance to collards and kale since it was composed of leaves that did not form a head.

It is thought that wild cabbage was brought to Europe around 600 B.C. by groups of Celtic wanderers. It was grown in Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations that held it in high regard as a general panacea capable of treating a host of health conditions.

Cabbage is one of the oldest vegetables known, and has been cultivated for over 4,000 years. It was originally found growing wild on the seashores of Southern Europe, England and Denmark.

While it's unclear when and where the headed cabbage that we know today was developed, cultivation of cabbage spread across northern Europe into Germany, Poland and Russia, where it became a very popular vegetable in local food cultures.

The Italians are credited with developing the Savoy cabbage. Russia, Poland, China and Japan are a few of the leading producers of Savoy cabbage today.

Sauerkraut, a dish made from fermented cabbage, has a colorful legacy. Dutch sailors consumed it during extended exploration voyages to prevent scurvy. Americans today consume about 387

million pounds of sauerkraut annually.

Choose cabbage heads that are firm and dense with shiny, crisp, colorful leaves free of cracks, bruises and blemishes.

Keeping cabbage cold will keep it fresh and help it retain its vitamin C content. Put the whole head in a plastic bag in the crisper of your refrigerator. Red and green cabbage will keep this way for about 2 weeks while Savoy cabbage will keep fresh for about 1 week.

The world record for eating cabbage is held by Charles Hardy. He ate 6 pounds 9 ounces in 9 minutes.

The world's largest cabbage is credited to William Collingwood of County Durham, England, whose prized cabbage in 1865 weighed in at 123 pounds.

Cabbage is considered Russia's national food. Russians eat about seven times as much cabbage as the average North American.

There is a legend told to children that babies come from Cabbage Patches. Babe Ruth used to wear a cabbage leaf under his hat during games. He would switch out for a fresh leaf halfway through each game.

In the wild, cabbage species are native to the Mediterranean where wild cole crops are found growing along the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of Europe. Cabbages and kale presumably originated in Western Europe; cauliflower and broccoli in the Mediterranean region.

Cabbage contains quercetin, an antioxidant that is a natural antihistamine that can benefit allergy sufferers.

A chemical (isothiocyanates) found in cabbages may lower the risk of lung cancer in smokers by as much as 38%.

Cabbage Chemistry fun~ Red cabbage water is an indicator for pH. It will go red in acidic solutions and green in basic solutions. It will stay its purple color in neutral solutions.

World Cabbage Day is on February the 17<sup>th</sup>.

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