

Beef Cabbage Rolls with Sweet Onion Gravy

Tender cabbage leaves wrapped around a cooked beef and rice filling, baked in broth and finished with a savory sweet onion gravy. No tomato sauce needed.



PREP

30 minutes

COOK

1 hour 15 minutes

TOTAL

1 hour 45 minutes

SERVES

4 servings (about 12 rolls)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large head green cabbage (about 12 large usable leaves)
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 small onion, finely chopped, for the filling
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided, or less to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, divided
- 1 large sweet onion, thinly sliced, for the gravy
- 2 cups low-sodium beef broth
- 2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons cold water

DIRECTIONS

1. Soften the cabbage leaves: Heat the oven to 350 degrees F. Bring a large pot of water to a gentle boil. Remove the cabbage core with a small knife. Carefully lower the cabbage into the water with the cored end facing up. As the outer leaves soften, loosen them with tongs and transfer them to a tray. Start checking after 5 to 7 minutes; keep cooking and peeling until you have about 12 pliable leaves. Let them cool enough to handle, then shave down each thick central rib without cutting through the leaf.
2. Cook the beef and rice filling: Heat 1 teaspoon of the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook the finely chopped small onion for 4 to 5 minutes, until softened. Add the ground beef, garlic powder, 1/2 teaspoon of the salt, and black pepper. Break up the beef and cook until it reaches 160 degrees F on a food thermometer, about 7 to 10 minutes. Drain excess fat, stir in the cooked rice, and let the filling cool slightly.
3. Start the sweet onion gravy: In the same skillet, heat the remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil over medium-low heat. Add the sliced sweet onion and cook for 12 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft and lightly golden. Stir in the broth, soy sauce, and brown sugar, scraping up the browned bits. Bring to a simmer. Taste before adding any of the remaining salt; you may not need it.
4. Fill and roll: Place about 1/4 cup filling near the stem end of each cabbage leaf, dividing the mixture evenly. Fold the sides inward and roll toward the tip, keeping the filling enclosed without squeezing too tightly. Smaller leaves need less filling. Lay spare cabbage leaves in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking

dish, if desired, and arrange the rolls seam-side down.

5. Bake until tender: Spoon the sliced onions and broth mixture over the rolls. Cover the dish tightly with foil and bake for about 45 minutes, or until the cabbage is fork-tender and the centers reach 165 degrees F. If the leaves are still firm, cover again and bake for another 10 to 15 minutes. Refrigerated assembled rolls will take longer to heat through.
6. Thicken the gravy and serve: Carefully ladle or pour the cooking liquid and onions into a saucepan, keeping the rolls covered and warm. Whisk the cornstarch with the cold water until smooth. Bring the cooking liquid to a simmer, stir in the slurry, and simmer for 2 to 4 minutes, stirring, until lightly thickened. If too thick, add a splash of broth. Spoon the sweet onion gravy over the rolls and serve.

SWAPS & NOTES

Timing and yield are estimates. Cabbage size, leaf thickness, and oven performance affect the finished batch; allow extra time for a chilled dish or firm leaves.

Use cooked rice, not dry rice. About 1/3 cup dry rice makes roughly 1 cup cooked, depending on variety. Rice cooking time is additional if you do not have cooked rice ready.

The sliced sweet onion and olive oil are additions to the original filling-only onion version, giving the gravy its onion flavor.

Assemble up to 24 hours ahead with cooled filling, refrigerate promptly, and bake until the centers reach 165 degrees F. Count storage time from when the beef and rice were first cooked.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Peel softened leaves away gradually instead of forcing stiff leaves off the head.

Trim the thick rib so the cabbage folds without splitting.

Use low-sodium broth and soy sauce, then taste before adding the remaining salt.

Simmer the cornstarch slurry in the cooking liquid on the stovetop for even thickening.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/beef-cabbage-rolls-with-sweet-onion-gravy/>