

Eating Local and Seasonal: Asian Vegetables - Part 2

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An increasing number of vegetables native to other countries are being grown in Ontario. Read on for part two of Asian vegetables that are grown locally. You can find these vegetables during the months of June to November in most Asian supermarkets.

White radish, also known as, **Daikon Radish**, is popular in Japanese, Korean and Chinese cuisine. Its appearance resembles much like a thicker-sized white carrot, that in fact, the direct translation of its name in Chinese is "white carrot." This vegetable is most often cooked in braised dishes with meat and sauces resulting in a tender texture that is sweet and filled with flavour. When consumed raw, white radish has a light crunchy texture that makes it perfect for salads. In Japan and Korea, it is often sliced or julienned, then pickled or seasoned with spices. The slightly tart or spicy flavours make it a very appetizing side dish to go with any meal.

Napa cabbage is another vegetable commonly found in East Asia. It has a longer body of an oval shape compared to the round heads of cabbage found in Western grocery stores. The leaves range from light to medium green, with thick, white, crispy stems. Perhaps the most famous use for napa cabbage is in kimchi, a spicy fermented appetizer that is almost always present with Korean meals. The vegetable has a mild and sweet flavour and in Chinese cuisine is often used in stronger flavoured dishes to absorb flavour.



Photos (clockwise from top left): 1. Pea shoots sold by the bag in grocery store; 2. Bundles of Napa cabbage; 3. White radish; 4. Containers of kimchi, made from fermented Napa cabbage

Pea shoots, also called pea tips, in Asian cooking often come from the snow pea plant. The shoots or tips refer to the tender young leaves and stems that grow near the pea pods at the end of the branches. Compared to the Napa cabbage, pea shoots or tips are much more flavourful and often don't need a lot of extra seasoning in its preparation. The most common way of preparing this vegetable is to simply stir-fry with some garlic.



Napa Cabbage Rolls

Makes 4-6 servings

Ingredients:

1 lb	Lean ground beef or turkey
2	Carrots, shredded
1 cup	Cooked brown rice or quinoa
4-5	Garlic cloves, minced
2 tbsp	Ginger, minced
1	Small onion, minced
3 tbsp	Low sodium soy sauce
2 tbsp	Sesame oil
2 tsp	Rice vinegar
1 tsp	Chili or Chili garlic sauce
	Salt and pepper to taste
	Leaves from 1 head of Napa cabbage

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Prepare the filling by combining uncooked meat, shredded carrots, cooked rice (or quinoa), garlic, ginger, onion, soy sauce, sesame oil, rice vinegar, chili sauce and a pinch of salt and black pepper in a large mixing bowl.
3. To make your napa leaves easy to roll, use a rolling pin to flatten to make leaves more pliable.
4. Spoon your filling to each leaf. Carefully roll each leaf tightly and place side by side in a large baking dish. Pour 1 cup of water over stuffed cabbage leaves and cover with aluminum foil. Baked for 30-35 minutes or until completely cooked through.
5. Serve with juices from baking dish and additional chili sauce.

Sources:

1. Recipe by Aggie's Kitchen (<https://aggieskitchen.com/asian-stuffed-napa-cabbage-rolls/>)
2. Napa Cabbage Rolls (Original photo) by Stacy Spensley from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/notahipster/4588020123> (CC BY 2.0)