



Memphis Chopped Coleslaw

THERE ARE MANY coleslaw variations throughout the country, but one—Memphis chopped coleslaw—stands out for its sweet dressing and unique combination of ingredients. This coleslaw is studded with celery seeds, crunchy green bell pepper, and carrots and tossed with an unapologetically sugary mustard dressing that's balanced by a bracing hit of vinegar. With its bold, brash flavors, this slaw is a perfect match for even the spiciest and smokiest barbecue. Another thing that sets this coleslaw apart is the way the cabbage is sliced. The recipe calls for cutting thin strips into ¼-inch pieces.

I tried a few recipes for Memphis coleslaw, and I was not impressed. My disillusionment was fueled by the cabbage. Due to its high water content, raw cabbage exudes liquid when tossed with a dressing, making the slaw loose and watery. In the test kitchen, we often remedy this by salting the cabbage before dressing it; the salt wilts and tenderizes the cabbage, drawing out excess moisture along the way. Once rinsed and thoroughly patted dry with paper towels, the cabbage is the base for a sturdy coleslaw that doesn't become watery or limp. Sure enough, salting, draining, and rinsing the cabbage made a huge difference in my Memphis slaw. While I was at it, I decided to toss the bell peppers and carrots with the salt as well for an even drier slaw.

I moved on to the dressing. When I started researching recipes, I was intrigued that many called for a combination of refrigerator staples (yellow mustard, mayonnaise, sour cream, and

ketchup) to give the dressing complex flavor. Tasters told me the complexity was there, but some felt that the dressing lacked punch. Switching from ketchup to garlicky chili sauce helped, as did adding shredded onion, which I salted and drained along with the other vegetables. Adding ¼ cup of cider vinegar perked up the dressing considerably, contributing a pleasant brightness and mild acidity. Finally, using a spicy jalapeño chile in the slaw (instead of bitter green bell pepper) and brown sugar in the dressing (instead of white) gave the slaw just the right mix of savory and sweet.

But even though my slaw's dressing had the boldness I wanted, tasters noted that the flavors still seemed somehow divergent. One recipe I found called for briefly cooking the dressing before pouring it over the cabbage to help the components meld. While this sounded promising in terms of flavor, I worried that the warm sauce might cook the cabbage and make it soft and soggy. Nevertheless, I decided to give it a try. After one bite, I realized that I couldn't have been more wrong. Although the cabbage did absorb some of the hot dressing, it remained crisp and crunchy. Better yet, it was seasoned through and through. —*Jeremy Sauer*

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SERVES 8 TO 10

For a spicier coleslaw, add the minced ribs and seeds from the jalapeño. Be sure to thoroughly

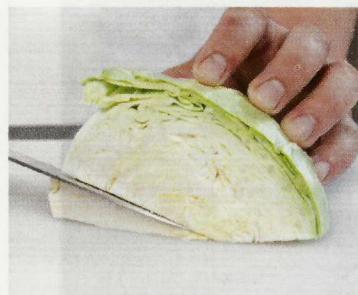
dry the cabbage after draining and rinsing it, or the slaw will be watery. Grate the onion on the large holes of a box grater.

- 1 head green cabbage (2 pounds), cored and cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 small onion, grated
- 1 carrot, peeled and shredded
- 1 jalapeño chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ⅔ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup yellow mustard
- ¼ cup chili sauce
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon celery seeds

1. Toss cabbage, onion, carrot, jalapeño, and salt in colander set over bowl. Let sit until wilted, about 1 hour. Rinse cabbage mixture under cold water, drain, and dry well with paper towels. Transfer cabbage mixture to bowl. (Cabbage mixture can be covered and refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)

2. Bring sugar, mustard, chili sauce, mayonnaise, sour cream, vinegar, and celery seeds to boil in medium saucepan over medium heat. Pour over cabbage mixture and toss to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours before serving.

CHOPPING CABBAGE FOR COLESLAW



1. Cut cabbage into quarters, then trim and discard hard core.



2. Separate cabbage into small stacks of leaves that flatten when pressed.



3. Cut each stack of cabbage leaves into ¼-inch-wide strips.



4. Cut strips into ¼-inch pieces.