

Spring Cabbage Rolls with Lemon Shallot Glaze

The secret to easy cabbage rolls is, to begin with, a large loosely packed head of cabbage, the kind found at your local markets or organic coop. I so love the concept of cabbage rolls as they allow me to literally let my imagination run wild. They are a fantastic end of the week dish to use up whatever bits have been forgotten in your fridge and can easily become a comfort staple. In this version, I was inspired by leftover short grain brown rice, a single fennel bulb, two lonely leeks, and a handful of mushrooms. The end result was remarkable.

Cabbage

6-8 large outer cabbage leaves

Remove leaves careful not to create any tears. Stack in a deep large bowl of layout in a deep dish baking pan and cover with boiling water. Allow them to sit in the water until tender. Drain and lay them out on toweling to dry. Cut into the thick stem at the base of the leaf just enough to ease folding. This may be just a cut inwards or perhaps a small triangle is required.

If you are working with a cabbage head with tight leaves there is another method of submerging the entire head in a boiling pot of water until the leaves drop away.

Be sure to save the center of your cabbage to chop up for this soup or salad recipe.

Filling

- One prepared cup will fill 3-4 rolls depending on the size of cabbage leaves.
- 2 leeks
- 2 medium or one large fennel bulb and fronds. Thinly sliced and chopped
- 12 finely chopped mushrooms
- A few handfuls of thinly sliced fresh spinach leaves
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of pan-roasted hazelnuts, coarsely chopped (sub with walnuts, pecans, or almonds).
- 1-2 cups of cooked rice or other grain (amount depends on the number of rolls you are preparing)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fresh chopped herbs such as parsley, thyme, basil, and mint or 1-2 TBL of a dried herb blend.
- Salt and Pepper to taste
- Olive Oil

Slice leeks in half down the length, wash away any grit and pat dry. Chop all the way up to the green stems which hold just as much flavor as the base.

Heat oil in a heavy skillet, add leeks and sauté over medium heat, once they begin to soften and brown remove to a plate.

Add more oil if needed and chopped mushrooms, cooking over medium heat until golden in color.

Add fennel to mushrooms and continue cooking until fennel is aromatic and just slightly softened.

Remove mixture from heat, and pour into a large mixing bowl along with all remaining ingredients including the leeks. Combine well and season to taste.

Sauce

- 6-8 shallots peeled and sliced
- 4 TBL Coconut oil or Vegan Butter

- 2-3 TBL Rice Flour or starch (arrowroot, cornstarch) for thickening
- Juice from 2 lemons
- 1 cup plant-based milk or cream (the thicker the milk the creamier the sauce)
- 1 cup vegetable broth prepared
- salt and pepper to taste
- 3-5 saffron threads- allow them to bloom in a bit of boiling water for 15 mins before adding (optional)

Using the same pan over medium heat add coconut oil or vegan butter and when warm add shallots. Sauté until soft and beginning to caramelize. They can burn quickly so keep a close watch on the temperature.

Use the flour or starch to make a roux for thickening.

When well integrated with the shallots slowly add the prepared vegetable broth and saffron with water. Whisk until smooth and bring this all to a simmer and allow to thicken.

To finish off this sauce add lemon juice and plant-based milk or cream, heat thoroughly and season to taste.