

Italian Style cabbage rolls

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Sometimes the most meaningful recipes come from unexpected places. This Italian style cabbage rolls recipe, inspired by my ex-mother-in-law's traditional Polish cabbage rolls, holds a special place in my heart. While life may have taken us in different paths, her recipe remains – one that I've recreated with a little Italian flair. I added classic Italian ingredients, like parmesan cheese, fresh herbs and my easy marinara sauce. As someone who likes to experiment in the kitchen, I couldn't resist blending her recipe with Italian flavors that remind me of my roots. The result is a dish that pays homage to her heritage while incorporating a taste of mine.

Tender cabbage leaves are stuffed with a beef, cheese and rice filling. The rolls are then laid on a bed of my marinara sauce topped with more marinara before being baked to a delicious perfection. The result is a hearty, satisfying dish perfect for family dinners or special gatherings.

How to make Italian style cabbage rolls easy

At first glance, Italian -style cabbage rolls might seem like a daunting recipe, but with a good prep plan and a step by step approach, this dish becomes easy to make.

PREP PLAN FOR SUCCESS

1. Softening the cabbage is one of the most important steps, and it's also something you can do in advance. Boil the cabbage , separate the leaves and store in an

airtight container for up to two days. This way, when it's time to assemble the rolls your cabbage is ready to go.

2. Make the marinara the day before: The tomato sauce can be made a day ahead or do like I do and always have it on hand. Marinara sauce is one of the easiest sauces to prepare in advance and keep frozen in different size containers for easy recipe building.
3. You can also prepare the meat and rice filling ahead of time. Combine the ingredients, cover and refrigerate.
4. Once the cabbage, sauce and filling are ready you can assemble the cabbage rolls. At this point bake the rolls for immediate use or they can be frozen either already baked or frozen unbaked, thawed out and baked when you are ready to serve,

Ingredients

- 1 medium head of cabbage
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup grated parmesan
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup chopped Italian parsley
- salt and pepper to taste
- 4 cups my easy marinara sauce

Instructions

1. Prepare the cabbage by removing as much of the core as possible. Then place the cabbage in a large pot of salted water. Bring to a boil and cook for 5 minutes or until you can easily separate the leaves with thongs.

You may need to help the leaves off using a knife. Set aside to cool. The smaller leaves can be frozen for soup.

2. Make the filling in a saute pan in 2 tbsp. of olive oil cook the onion and garlic until soft and translucent. Then add the ground beef and cook until brown.
3. Using the same water from the cabbage cook the rice for 5-7 minutes or until the rice is cooked al dente. Drain the rice
4. Mix the cooked ground beef mixture with rice. Add the egg , parmesan, Italian parsley and 1 cup of the marinara sauce, salt and pepper to taste mix until well combined
5. Assemble the cabbage rolls: Place a cabbage leaf on a flat surface place 2 tbsp. of the filling in the center . Fold the flaps over the filling then roll up jelly roll style.
6. Line an oven proof casserole dish with 1 cup of my easy marinara sauce. place the filled cabbage rolls on top. Top with the remaining 2 cups of marinara.
7. Bake in a preheated 375-degree oven for 35- 45 minutes. Top with additional Italian parsley . ENJOY!!!