

Our Family Large-Batch Cabbage Rolls

Make them once, fill the freezer, and make dinner easier later.

YIELD About 30 generous rolls	OVEN 400°F	FRESH About 2–3 hours	FROM FROZEN About 3 hours
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Ingredients

RICE

- 750 g Arborio rice
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- About 6 large garlic cloves, or to taste
- A few tablespoons olive oil
- About 4 chicken bouillon cubes
- Water, as needed

FILLING & ASSEMBLY

- 7 lb (3.2 kg) ground pork
- Cooked and cooled Arborio rice
- About 3/4 cup Our Family Pasta Sauce
- About 3 chicken bouillon cubes
- Plenty of freshly ground black pepper; salt to taste
- About 2 large green cabbages
- About 2 jars Our Family Pasta Sauce
- Water, for thinning sauce
- Red bell pepper, thinly sliced

Filling ratio: Aim for roughly a 50/50 balance of cooked rice and pork, but tailor it to your preference.

Method

1. Prepare the rice

Sauté onion in olive oil until softened. Add garlic briefly, then Arborio rice and cook a few minutes. Dissolve about 4 bouillon cubes in water; add enough to cover the rice. Cover and simmer on low, stirring occasionally and adding more water as absorbed, until tender. Cool completely before mixing with raw pork.

2. Prepare the cabbage

Fill a very large pot about halfway with water and bring to a boil. Remove rough outer leaves and cut out the core. Add cabbage and use tongs to push it down so hot water gets into the cored opening and between the leaves. Remove leaves as they loosen. You are softening, not cooking, them; large heads may take about 10 minutes each.

3. Trim the leaves

Shave down the thick centre rib at the bottom of each cooled leaf without cutting through it, keeping the leaf intact but easier to fold.

4. Make the filling

Combine pork with enough completely cooled rice for roughly a 50/50 mixture. Dissolve about 3 bouillon cubes in about 3/4 cup Family Pasta Sauce and add. Season generously with black pepper and salt to taste; mix thoroughly.

Taste before you roll

Fry about 1 tablespoon of filling until fully cooked. Taste and adjust seasoning before rolling the batch.

5. Fill, fold, flip & roll

Place a generous mound of filling near the bottom of a leaf. Fold the bottom over the filling, fold sides inward, flip/turn as needed, and continue rolling until enclosed.

6. Thin the sauce

Dilute Family Pasta Sauce generously with water. It should be much thinner than pasta sauce because the rolls absorb liquid as they cook.

7. Assemble

Spread a thin layer of diluted sauce in a glass or metal baking pan. Arrange rolls snugly but not tightly. Add more diluted sauce so they sit in sauce without swimming. Add about 4–5 thin red pepper slices per pan, or less to taste. Cover with extra cabbage leaves, then tightly with foil.

8. Bake

Bake covered at 400°F for about 2–3 hours. Time varies with roll size, pan size and spacing. Cabbage should be very tender and filling thoroughly cooked. Ground pork must reach at least 160°F (71°C). The rolls can cook well beyond that for tenderness. Sauce may leave the filling pink-toned, so use a thermometer rather than colour.

Make Them Now, Eat Them Later

Freezer instructions and a smaller-batch option.

Freeze Uncooked

For freezer meals, assemble completely in 9 × 13-inch foil pans with diluted sauce, red pepper and extra cabbage leaves on top. Cover tightly with a foil lid or foil-lined cardboard lid and **freeze uncooked**.

Cooking From Frozen

No need to thaw. Bake covered directly from frozen at **400°F for about 3 hours**, allowing extra time if needed for larger rolls or a very full pan. Check a large roll near the centre and make sure the cabbage is very tender and filling thoroughly cooked.

FAMILY TIP

Use a spatula, not a fork, to lift finished cabbage rolls. When very tender, piercing them with a fork can make them fall apart.

Prefer a Smaller Batch?

Use the same method with the quantities below. Yield varies with leaf size and how generously you fill them.

RICE

- About 215 g Arborio rice
- 1/2 medium onion
- 2 large garlic cloves, or to taste
- About 1 tbsp olive oil
- About 1 chicken bouillon cube
- Water, as needed

FILLING & ASSEMBLY

- 2 lb (900 g) ground pork
- Cooked and cooled Arborio rice
- About 3 tbsp Family Pasta Sauce
- About 1 chicken bouillon cube, dissolved in sauce
- Black pepper and salt, to taste
- 1 large green cabbage
- About 1/2–3/4 jar Family Pasta Sauce
- Water for thinning
- A few thin slices red bell pepper

Small-batch note: Follow the same preparation and baking method. Aim for roughly a 50/50 balance of cooked rice and pork, adjusting to your preference. Bake covered at 400°F for approximately 2–3 hours, using tenderness and internal temperature as your guides.

A Recipe Worth Keeping

I learned these cabbage rolls from my mother-in-law and, over the years, learned to make them for my own family. Writing the recipe down helps preserve the little details — how soft the cabbage should be, how the filling should look, and how tender the finished rolls should become — so they can keep being made and passed along.