Yamitsuki (Addictive Cabbage)

Recipe from Aiko Cascio
Adapted by Ligaya Mishan

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Total Time	25 minutes
Prep Time	5 minutes
Cook Time	10 minutes, plus 10 minutes' resting
Rating	★★★★☆ (193)

In Japanese, “yamitsuki” means addictive — a precise description of this seemingly humble side dish of cabbage, gently torn and simply anointed with sesame oil and seeds, garlic, black pepper and a fingerprint’s worth of salt. So few ingredients, so little time required, and you can’t stop eating it. Often served at izakayas, the Japanese equivalent of pubs, the cabbage is especially good for refreshing the palate and easing the stomach between bites of richer, fattier foods. Aiko Cascio, an instructor for the New York-based League of Kitchens cooking school, prefers tearing the leaves by hand rather than using a knife because the rougher edges absorb more of the sesame oil. This recipe, from “The League of Kitchens Cookbook” (Harvest, 2024) by Lisa Kyung Gross, Rachel Wharton and the women of the League of Kitchens cooking school, calls for flathead cabbage, also known as Taiwanese cabbage, which is soft and tender, with space between the ribs. If you can find only green, Ms. Cascio advises cutting it into smaller pieces and letting it rest a little longer in salt, for greater pliancy. **—Ligaya Mishan**

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

1 pound Taiwanese flathead cabbage or Napa cabbage (about ½ cabbage), see Tip

Kosher salt (such as Diamond

PREPARATION

Step 1

Prepare the cabbage: Peel away any damaged outer leaves from the cabbage. Trim any brown or oxidized bits, then halve the cabbage through its core and remove the solid white heart— you can usually do this just by cutting out a little triangle with the tip of a large knife.

Crystal) and pepper

2 medium garlic cloves

2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil

1 tablespoon untoasted sesame seeds

Step 2

Cut the leaves of the cabbage into rough 1¼-inch square pieces. If you spot any very thick pieces, like the parts of the leaves that were closer to the core, cut them not into squares but into thin slices about ¼-inch wide.

Step 3

Wash and drain the cut pieces of the cabbage in a colander in the sink. (They do not need to be totally dry.) Put the cabbage pieces in a very large bowl and sprinkle them with 3 tablespoons salt, then crunch and scrunch the leaves with your hands, making sure they're all separated, well mixed in with the salt, and beginning to soften. Let the salted cabbage sit for 10 minutes.

Step 4

Make the dressing: While the cabbage sits, finely grate the garlic into a smooth paste into a small bowl (you should have about ½ tablespoon). Whisk the sesame oil, ⅛ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper into the bowl with the garlic.

Step 5

Check the cabbage: After 10 minutes, the cabbage should be slightly wilted and taste slightly salty. Test a leaf by rinsing it under running water and tasting it; it should taste like the leaf absorbed some salt. (If not, let it sit for 10 more minutes and then taste again.) Put the cabbage pieces in a colander or salad spinner, rinse off the salt under running water, then drain the cabbage as well as you can. (It won't be bone dry, but it shouldn't be sopping wet.) Let it sit until you are ready to dress the salad.

Step 6

Dress the salad: When you're ready to serve the dish, transfer the cabbage to a serving bowl, add the dressing and use two large spoons (or chopsticks) to toss until coated. Sprinkle the salad with the sesame seeds, again making sure everything is mixed together.

Step 7

Serve the cabbage: You can either serve this family style in a large bowl on a table or you can give each diner a small bowl as part of a larger meal with rice. This is best eaten the day it's made, as the garlic intensifies in the dressing over time.

TIP

Taiwanese flathead cabbage, which has looser, softer leaves than other varieties, is available in Asian markets. If you can't locate it, Napa cabbage is a good substitute.

Private Notes

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