Töltött Káposzta (Hungarian Stuffed Cabbage)

Make-ahead · Serves a crowd · Serves 8–10 (about 16 rolls)

Ken's note: TBD

Cabbage leaves wrapped around a pork-and-rice filling, simmered over sauerkraut with smoked sausage and paprika, and served with sour cream. It is better the next day.

Ingredients

- 1 large head green cabbage (about 3 lb)
- 2 lb ground pork
- ½ cup long-grain rice, rinsed
- 2 Tbsp lard or oil
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 1 Tbsp sweet Hungarian paprika
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp dried marjoram
- 1½ tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

For the pot

- 2 lb sauerkraut, drained (rinse briefly if very sour)
- 8 oz smoked sausage (kolbász or kielbasa), sliced, or 1 smoked ham hock
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 Tbsp sweet paprika
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 can (14 oz) crushed tomatoes (optional)
- 4 slices bacon
- 1–2 cups water or stock

To finish

- Sour cream
- Crusty bread

Optional rántás (to thicken)

- 2 Tbsp lard
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1 tsp paprika

Method

1. Core the cabbage and freeze it overnight, then thaw; the leaves will peel off easily. (Or simmer it core-down in a large pot 8–10 minutes and peel off the leaves as they soften.) Shave the thick rib flat on about 16 leaves. Chop any leftover cabbage and mix it into the sauerkraut.
2. Cook the onion in the lard 5 minutes, until soft. Off the heat, stir in the paprika (it burns easily) and garlic. Cool. Mix gently with the pork, rice, egg, marjoram, salt, and pepper. Fry a small patty to check the seasoning.
3. Put a heaping ¼ cup of filling at the base of each leaf, fold in the sides, and roll up snugly (the rice will swell).
4. Heat the oven to 325°F. In a large Dutch oven, layer half the sauerkraut, with the sausage, sliced onion, paprika, bay, and tomatoes. Set the rolls on top, seam-side down, in layers. Cover with the remaining sauerkraut, lay the bacon on top, and add water to just come level with the rolls.
5. Bring to a simmer on the stove, then cover and bake 2 hours, until the cabbage and rice are tender.
6. For a thicker sauce, make the rántás: melt the lard, whisk in the flour and paprika for a minute, then whisk in a ladle of the pot juices and stir it back into the pot. Simmer 10 minutes. Taste and salt at the end (sauerkraut and sausage are salty).
7. Serve with a spoonful of sour cream and crusty bread. Reheat gently the next day.