

# Nappa Cabbage, Chinese Cabbage, Celery Cabbage, Pe-tsai

*Brassica rapa Pekinensis* Group is a member of the Brassicaceae (mustard) family. Varieties include the Che-foo types: Wong Bok, Wintertime, Tropical Pride, Spring Giant, and Tokyo Giant; and the Chihili types: Michihili, Jade Pagoda, Market Pride, Shantung, and Shaho Tsai.

There are two principal forms of Nappa cabbage. The Che-foo type (also known as Chiifu or Wong Bok, and sometimes Napa) develops a compact, often drum-shaped head slightly taller than it is wide. The head contains many broad, soft, light-green leaves. In the retail trade, nappa is usually understood to be this type. The other type, Chihili, forms a cylindrical head about three times as tall as it is wide. It has narrow, somewhat coarse leaves that are darker green than those of the Che-foo type.

**Other names.** Nappa cabbage is also known as *hakusai* (Japanese); *pai-tsai* (Mandarin Chinese); *won bok* (Cantonese Chinese); and *pechay* or *tsina* (Filipino).

## Market Information

**Current production and yield.** Nappa cabbage is available year-round from California and Hawaii. New York, Florida, New Jersey, Michigan, and Ohio are seasonal producers; they do not produce the crop in summer.

## Culture

**Climatic requirements.** Nappa cabbage is a cool-season annual vegetable. It grows best with short days and moderate to cool temperatures (60° to 70°F mean temperatures).

Flowering (bolting) is favored by exposure to low temperatures (40° to 50°F) and long days. Such conditions during growth can cause premature bolting.

Temperatures greater than 80° to 85°F favor the development of tip burn, a nonpathogenic disorder. Compact and mature heads are more susceptible to tip burn.



Nappa cabbage packed for market.  
(Photo: Vince Rubatzky)

**Propagation and care.** Nappa cabbage is relatively easy to grow. Plant it either by direct seeding or transplanting. Nappa cabbage plants require slightly more space per plant than regular cabbage. Use the same soil preparation, fertilization, and cultivation practices as you would for regular cabbage. Fertilizer requirements are similar to those for cauliflower. The crop will be ready 55 to 70 days after transplanting. Crop maturity can extend to 90 or 100 days with late varieties and less favorable (colder) growing temperatures. There is no exact age at which Nappa cabbage should be harvested, but heads should be firm and tight when ready. It may be eaten any time, once it has reached a usable size.

**Harvest and postharvest practices.** The USDA storage recommendation is 32°F at 95 to 100% relative humidity, with an approximate storage life of 2 to 3 months. Remove injured or diseased outer leaves before storage. Pack loosely and preferably upright in crates. Allow for air circulation in storage.

## Sources

### Seed

American Takii Inc., 301 Natividad Road, Salinas, CA 93906

Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Road, Albion, ME 04910

Nichols Garden and Nursery, 1190 North Pacific Highway, Albany, OR 97321

Park Seed Co., Cokesbury Road, Greenwood, SC 29647-0001

Sakata Seeds, 18695 Serene Drive, Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Seeds Blüm, Idaho City Stage, Boise, ID 83706

Sunrise Enterprises, P.O. Box 10058, Elmwood, CT 06110-0058

Tsang and Ma, P.O. Box 5644, Redwood City, CA 94063

### More information

Federal-State Market News Service. 1988. *Los Angeles fresh fruit and vegetable wholesale market prices 1988*. California Department of Food and Agriculture Bureau of Market News and USDA Marketing Service.

Federal-State Market News Service. 1987. *San Francisco fresh fruit and vegetable wholesale market prices 1987*. California Department of Food and Agriculture Bureau of Market News and USDA Marketing Service.

Harrington, Geri. 1984. *Grow your own Chinese vegetables*. Garden Way Publishing, Pownal, VT.

Kraus, James E. 1940. *Chinese cabbage varieties: Their classification, description, and culture in the central Great Plains*. Circ. 571. USDA, Washington, DC.

Mansour, N. S. 1990. *Chinese cabbage and leafy greens*. Vegetable Crops Recommendations. Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.

The Packer. 1990. *1990 produce availability and marketing guide*. Vance Publishing Corp., Overland Park, KS.

Rubatzky, Vincent, and Mas Yamaguchi. 1997. *World vegetables, 2d ed*. Chapman and Hall, New York, NY.

Stephens, James. *Minor vegetables*. 1988. Cooperative Extension Bulletin SP-40, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

USDA. n.d. *Table of container net weights*. USDA Marketing Service, Washington, DC.

USDA. 1987. *Tropical products transport handbook*. Agric. Handb. 668. USDA, Washington, DC.

Prepared by Claudia Myers.