



Choucroute Garni

Alsace, with its strong German influence, has a regional enthusiasm for sauerkraut. Generally, when anyone thinks of sauerkraut, what comes to mind is the traditional Alsatian choucroute garnie, cooked with fresh bacon and garnished with sausages, various cuts of pork, and potatoes, but there are myriad variations, including some with no meat at all.

Sauerkraut is fermented cabbage. The cabbage is finely shredded and salted, then packed into a weak brine solution that allows desirable bacteria to form, but inhibits undesirable ones. These welcome bacteria produce the lactic acid that gives the finished dish its flavor. In Alsace, the cabbages grown for sauerkraut are typically large and very, very dense and can weigh up to thirty pounds each.

Once the pickling process is finished, the sauerkraut must be cooked. In this classic version, it is slowly braised in white wine, and assorted meats are buried in it as it simmers. Whether you make your own sauerkraut for this dish or buy it from a charcuterie, you will be in for a treat because it absorbs so many flavors as it cooks. Sauerkraut is sold both cooked and cru, or “raw.” Raw sauerkraut is found in the refrigerated deli section; cooked in the canned vegetable section of the supermarket.

The raw is used here; if you use cooked sauerkraut, the end result will be more souplike.



- 3 lb raw or cooked sauerkraut (see note)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 10 juniper berries
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 2 whole cloves
- 6 peppercorns
- ¼ cup pork lard or rendered goose fat (butter can be substituted)
- 1 large onion, minced
- 4 smoked ham hocks, about 2 lb total weight
- 2 cups dry Riesling, Sylvaner or other dry white wine
- about 1 cup water
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- ¼ lb piece slab bacon

Preheat an oven to 325 degrees F.

If using raw sauerkraut, in a large bowl, soak the sauerkraut in cold water to cover for 15 minutes to remove some of its saltiness, and then taste it. If it is still too salty, soak again. Drain. Put the raw sauerkraut in a clean, dry kitchen towel, gather up the ends, and wring out the excess water. Cooked sauerkraut does not need to be rinsed.

Place the raw or cooked sauerkraut in a bowl, then using a fork, fluff it to rid it of any clumps.

Place the garlic, juniper berries, bay leaf, cloves, and peppercorns on a square of cheesecloth (muslin), bring the corners together, and tie securely with kitchen string.

In a deep, heavy pan with a lid, warm the lard or goose fat over medium heat. When it melts, add the onion and sauté slowly, reducing the heat if necessary, until the onion is translucent but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add half of the sauerkraut, the cheese cloth bag of seasonings, and the ham hocks, and then top with the remaining

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- ¼ lb piece lean fresh pork belly (optional)
- 8 firm-fleshed potatoes, peeled
- 6 pure pork frankfurters

sauerkraut. Pour over the wine and then add the water nearly to cover. Add the ground pepper and bring to a boil, uncovered.

Cover, place in the oven, and cook for 1 hour. At the end of the hour, stir the sauerkraut, pushing some to the side. Add the bacon and the fresh pork belly, if using, re-cover, and cook for 1 hour longer.

Remove the pan from the oven and stir the sauerkraut. Place the potatoes on the top. Cover and return to the oven to cook until the potatoes soften, about 30 minutes longer.

Just before the sauerkraut is ready, bring a sauce pan three-fourths full of water to a boil over high heat. Add the frankfurters and any other sausages you are using, reduce the heat to medium, and cook until the sausages are hot. Drain and add the sausages to the sauerkraut, turning once or twice.

To serve, transfer the sauerkraut to a warmed large, shallow bowl or deep platter. Top with the ham hocks and frankfurters. Cut the bacon and the fresh pork belly, if used, into slices and add them as well. Surround the sauerkraut with the potatoes and serve hot.

Grilled Shrimp and Scallops

These grilled shrimp and scallops are easy and delicious. Try dipping the shrimp in drawn butter and the scallops in tartare sauce.



- 4 cloves of fresh garlic, coarsely chopped
- 3 Tbs of Italian parsley, coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- large uncooked shrimp and scallops
- kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper

Mix the garlic, parsley and olive oil. Add the shrimp and scallops and mix to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Place the scallops and shrimp in the refrigerator to marinate for 30 minutes.

Place the shrimp and scallops on separate skewers. Grill over a hot fire just until the shrimp turn pink and the scallops are browned.

Note: The scallops will initially stick to the hot grill. Allow them to cook until they release from the grill; a little nudging may be necessary.

Scallops are sold either "wet packed" or "dry packed". Dry packed scallops are packed in ice and shipped without preservatives. Wet packed scallops have been treated by soaking them in water with sodium tripolyphosphate, or STP, which causes them to plump and increases their weight. They usually are less expensive than dry packed scallops, but remember that up to 20% of what you are paying for is water.

