

Cabbage and Sausages

1 tbsp bacon fat
4 butcher's sausages
2 cups chopped cabbage (green or red)
¾ cup sliced onion
4 cloves garlic
2 cups chopped red potatoes
1 tsp caraway seeds
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 cup stock or beer
Salt, black pepper, and vinegar to taste



This is my absolute favorite supper for a rainy and chilly evening. It takes one skillet, and about 20 minutes to put together, and then it's hands off until everything turns tasty. It's easily adaptable to different portion sizes and tastes. It's pure comfort food. It reminds me of our trip to my hometown's Oktoberfest. It's impossible to be unhappy while eating this.

A note on some of the ingredients. By butcher's sausage, I mean one that hasn't been previously cooked. You want a good bratwurst, Italian sausage (hot or mild, your choice), or even a jalapeño cheddar sausage. The important part is that it has a good fat content (like 30%, this is not diet food. Your cardiologist will dislike you for eating this), and that it is raw so that the fat in the sausage renders into the dish and becomes one with the braise ("becomes one with the braise" is my new mantra). A smoked or previously cooked sausage will work in a pinch, but the fat content won't be quite as rich. You could add a bit more bacon fat to compensate for this. If you don't eat pork, I'd suggest a good chicken sausage, especially a chicken apple sausage! Often, especially in the fall, I will add slices of apples to the pan, and let me tell you, apples and onions and fat is just something special. If you don't have a jar of bacon fat at your disposal, start saving your bacon fat right this minute. In the meantime, you can chop up a few strips of bacon and fry it until crispy in your pan, then take the crispy bits and proceed. If there are any bacon pieces left by the time dinner is ready, sprinkle the bits on top before you serve. If you don't eat pork, schmaltz, duck fat, or clarified butter would be tasty. If all else fails, vegetable oil. Not a spicy olive oil. I do this in a cast iron skillet, or my enameled brazier. But whatever large pan or pot you have will work.

Melt the bacon fat over medium-high heat. Once hot, sear the sausages on both sides until brown and smelling delicious. The casings may split. That's okay. They'll probably split later anyway.

Once browned, take the sausages out. They will not be cooked all the way, yet. Into the tasty fatty deliciousness in the pan, add the sliced onion. Let brown for a moment, then add the cabbage. Stir it around, then leave it alone and let them both brown until you can smell something that smells like Thanksgiving, about 4 minutes.

Sprinkle it with about a teaspoon of salt (we can always add more later so it is far better to under salt now than oversalt).

Add in your potatoes, caraway seeds, mustard seeds, and stock or beer (I'm partial to Back Forty's Truck Stop Honey, but any brown ale or lager will be delicious. Or an Oktoberfest beer.). Stir to combine. Put the half-cooked sausages on top, then cover the pan with a lid, and let it bubble away until the sausage is cooked, roughly 10-15 minutes.

If there's liquid in the pan after the sausages are ready, take the lid off and let the liquid boil and reduce until it's just saucy enough for you. You can also take the sausages out but leave the lid on if the potatoes need more cooking time. Add vinegar, salt, and pepper to taste. In my household, we use several tablespoons of white or apple cider vinegar. But we like things very acidic here.

If you're feeling fancy, skip putting the potatoes in the braise and serve the sausages and cabbage on top of mashed potatoes. My fiancé likes to slather his in whole grain mustard. I like to have a beer with mine.

Eat, be warm, and be happy.