



Chinese Cabbage and Bok Choy

DID YOU KNOW?

Turnips, Chinese cabbage, and bok choy are all the same plant species.



Around the Mediterranean, ancient farmers saved seeds from the plants with the largest roots. They wanted plants with large roots that could be stored for winter. In ancient China, farmers saved seeds from the plants with the fleshiest stems and leaves. After hundreds of years of selecting seeds, the species evolved into the turnip in the Mediterranean and Chinese cabbage and bok choy in China.



CLASSIFYING CHINESE CABBAGE AND BOK CHOY

FAMILY

Cruciferae or Brassicaceae (mustard family)



There are about 3,000 species of herbs, shrubs, and trees in this family.

GENUS

Brassica

In Latin, this means "like cabbage."



SPECIES

rapa

There are many varieties of this species, including:



turnip
B. rapa variety *rapa*



bok choy
B. rapa variety *chinensis*



Chinese cabbage
B. rapa variety *pekinensis*

THE CHINESE CABBAGE AND BOK CHOY PLANTS

Chinese cabbage leaves are in a "head" and bok choy leaves are loosely joined together.

Chinese cabbage



The heads of Chinese cabbage can have different shapes.

Chinese cabbage leaves are crinkly, and have thick, white veins. The outside leaves are green. The inside leaves are green or yellow.



bok choy

Bok choy has smooth, glossy green leaves and white stalks.

GROWING AND HARVESTING CHINESE CABBAGE AND BOK CHOY

These plants do best when the weather is cool and the days are short. If days are long or temperatures too hot or too cold, then flowers form instead of leaves. In areas with cold winters and hot summers, plant in the late summer and fall. In areas with cool or warm winters, plant in winter.

These plants like a rich, moist, loamy soil.

It's fall, so I can finally plant my bok choy. I'm going to grow some from seeds and some from transplants.



Harvest before seed stalks form. Cut close to the ground.

USES

The leaves of bok choy and Chinese cabbage are crisp and have a mild flavor. They can be used in salads, stir-fries, and soups.

