Cabbage Rolls

1 fresh cabbage
1 lb. ground beef, not too lean
Uncooked long-grain rice
1 jar sauerkraut, with juice
3 14 oz. cans whole tomatoes, with juice
salt
freshly-ground black pepper
basil
minced garlic
chicken broth
Tabasco
bay leaf

1. **Prepare the cabbage.** Remove the stem from the cabbage, but do not separate the leaves. Boil the cabbage gently in lightly-salted water until the leaves are tender but not completely limp. Rinse leaves in cold water to stop cooking. Set cabbage aside.

2. **Prepare the meat.** Mix together equal amounts ground beef and rice. Spice the meat as desired. Regular additions include salt and pepper, minced fresh garlic and basil (dried or fresh).

3. **Prepare the rolls.** Take a small handful of the meat/rice mixture and place it in the stem end of a cabbage leaf. Fold the sides of the leaf over and then roll from the stem to the end of the leaf. Repeat.

4. **Prepare the pot.** Take a large stockpot and place a large handful of sauerkraut on the bottom. Lay prepared cabbage rolls on top of the sauerkraut. About 5 or 6 rolls will make one layer. Lay another handful of sauerkraut on top of the rolls. Carefully crush a few whole canned tomatoes and lay them on top of the sauerkraut. Continue alternating layers until you have used all the meat. Then pour all remaining sauerkraut and tomato juices into the pot. Finish by adding enough chicken broth to bring the liquid level to within 1 inch of the top of the pot. This should not quite cover the topmost layer of cabbage rolls. Tuck a bay leaf into the pot and add a dash of Tabasco.

5. **Cooking.** Cook on high heat until the pot starts to boil, then cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer gently for a couple of hours. Test by cutting into a roll on the top: if the rice is done, the rolls are done. Add more liquid as necessary to prevent burning. Be warned that this dish will really stink up your kitchen, beginning with prepping the cabbage.

**Variations:**
*Mix or substitute other ground meats, such as pork, sausage or venison.
*You can lower the sodium level by substituting water for the broth.
*If you like caraway seeds or dill seeds in your sauerkraut, consider adding them to your cabbage roll mixture.
*You can lay cabbage leaves between the layers if you really like cabbage.

—Meg Sisk