Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 6 hours (Low) or 3 hours (High)
Total Time: 6 hours 15 minutes
Servings: 8 (about 1.5 cups each)

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Introduction

There is nothing quite as comforting as a bowl of hot, savory soup simmering away in the slow cooker on a cold day. This Crockpot Cabbage Soup is the ultimate “set it and forget it” meal. It is budget-friendly, incredibly nutritious, and packed with a savory, flavor-rich broth that will make your kitchen smell amazing all afternoon.

Packed with fiber-rich cabbage, protein-packed ground beef (or turkey), and a colorful medley of vegetables, this soup is a complete meal in one pot. It is naturally low in calories yet surprisingly filling, making it a favorite for those looking for a wholesome, hearty dinner without the heavy cream or excessive carbs. Whether you are meal-prepping for the week or feeding a hungry family, this soup delivers on flavor and convenience.

Ingredients

For the Soup Base:

- 1 lb lean ground beef (or ground turkey for a lighter option)
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into rounds
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, diced
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce
- 6 cups low-sodium beef broth (or vegetable broth)
- 1 small head green cabbage (about 2 lbs), cored and roughly chopped
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed (optional, for heartiness)

- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon salt (adjust to taste)
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce (optional, for depth of flavor)

For Garnish:

- Fresh parsley, chopped
- Grated Parmesan cheese
- Crusty bread for serving

Equipment

- 6-quart (or larger) slow cooker
- Large skillet
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Chef’s knife and cutting board
- Can opener
- Measuring cups and spoons

Instructions

Phase 1: Prep & Browning (Time: 15 Minutes | Intensity: Medium)

1. Prep the Vegetables: Wash and chop all vegetables first. Dice the onion, celery, and bell pepper. Peel and slice the carrots. Mince the garlic. Core and roughly chop the cabbage into bite-sized pieces. Peel and cube the potatoes (if using).

2. Brown the Meat: Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef and cook, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon, until it is fully browned (about 6-8 minutes). Drain any excess grease.

3. Sauté Aromatics: Add the diced onion and minced garlic to the skillet with the beef. Cook for 2-3 minutes until the onion is translucent and fragrant. This step builds a deeper flavor base than simply dumping raw meat into the slow cooker.

Phase 2: Loading the Slow Cooker (Time: 5 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Transfer: Carefully transfer the beef, onion, and garlic mixture to the bottom of the slow cooker.

2. Layer the Vegetables: Add the carrots, celery, bell pepper, and potatoes (if using) on top of the meat.

3. Add the Cabbage: Pile the chopped cabbage on top. It will look like a mountain, but it will cook down significantly.

4. Add Liquids & Seasonings: Pour in the diced tomatoes, tomato sauce, and beef broth. Add the Worcestershire sauce, oregano, basil, smoked paprika, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Tuck the bay leaf into the liquid.

5. Stir Gently: Give everything a gentle stir to combine, but do not overfill the pot. The cabbage will release its own liquid as it cooks.

Phase 3: The Slow Cook (Time: 6 Hours Low / 3 Hours High | Intensity: Low)

1. Set & Forget: Cover the slow cooker with the lid. Cook on LOW for 6 to 7 hours or on HIGH for 3 to 4 hours.

2. Resist the Urge: Keep the lid closed during cooking to maintain the heat and moisture. Opening the lid frequently will increase cooking time.

3. Check Doneness: The soup is ready when the cabbage is tender and translucent, the carrots are fork-tender, and the flavors have melded together.

Phase 4: Finishing Touches (Time: 5 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Remove Bay Leaf: Carefully remove and discard the bay leaf.

2. Taste & Adjust: Taste the soup and adjust the salt and pepper to your liking. If the soup is too thick, add a splash of extra broth. If it is too thin, you can mash a few of the potato cubes against the side of the pot to thicken it naturally.

3. Garnish: Ladle into bowls and top with fresh chopped parsley and a sprinkle of grated Parmesan cheese.

Flavor Variations

- Spicy Kick: Add ½ teaspoon of red pepper flakes or a diced jalapeño with the onions for a soup with a little heat.
- Italian Style: Swap the oregano and basil for 1 teaspoon of Italian seasoning and add a parmesan rind to the pot while cooking for extra umami.
- Vegetarian: Omit the ground beef and use vegetable broth. Add a can of drained and rinsed cannellini beans or lentils for protein.
- Low Carb: Skip the potatoes entirely and reduce the carrots to one. The soup will still be hearty thanks to the cabbage and meat.
- Beef & Barley: Add ½ cup of pearl barley with the broth. You may need to add an extra cup of broth, as barley absorbs a lot of liquid.

Nutrition

Note: Nutritional information is an estimate based on standard ingredients and does not include garnishes or bread.

Serving Size: 1.5 cups
Calories: 185
Total Fat: 6g
Saturated Fat: 2g
Cholesterol: 30mg
Sodium: 680mg

Total Carbohydrates: 18g
Dietary Fiber: 5g
Sugars: 7g
Protein: 13g