



Buying, Using Fully, and Storing Hakusai Cabbage

When buying *hakusai*, look for compact heads that feel fairly heavy for their size (the average weight of a single head is 2 kilograms (4 and 1/2 pounds). Ribs should be pearly white (though speckling on the outside is quite common).

After buying *hakusai*, wrap whatever portion you won't be using immediately in paper towels and then newspaper. Paper towels help prevent leaves from drying out and keep newsprint ink from smudging the *hakusai*. Properly stored (preferably upright), *hakusai* will keep in a cool spot for many weeks... providing ample opportunity to enjoy a wide range of dishes prepared with it. Take the *tsukai tsukusu* approach: use what you have fully.

Start by peeling back some of the outer leaves that may be bruised -- they make fine "lids" to place on top of *shio-zuké* pickles. Removing the (tough but sweet) core from quarter-head wedges will retard spoilage. I make a pickle from coarsely chopped bits of *hakusai* cores, liberally massaged with salt. After placing in a pickle press with kelp, citrus peel and *tōgarashi* chili, I lay the bruised outer leaves on top and apply pressure. Within a day, I have a sprightly *tsukémono* as my reward.

Next, set aside unblemished, full-sized leaves to make *Senmai Nabé*, layering them with thin slices of pork belly and carrot strips (full recipe can be downloaded from the website). The multi-layered savory meat-and-cabbage gets simmered table side and eaten with a citrusy soy dip sauce. For those who like their *nabé* hot pots spicy, add *yuzu koshō* to the dipping sauce: makes for bright "fire."

Still have *hakusai* left?



Tender center-of-the-head segments are perfect for quick stir-fries and soups. And... coming back full circle, make *tsukémono* pickles by thinly slicing whatever remains.



This time include other veggies such as cucumber, carrot, and radishes. Salt and massage. Once the liquid in your pickle press has risen, add strips of *kombu* and a healthy measure of fresh ginger juice (pressed from grated ginger). If you have the patience, wait a week, and let the mixture start to ferment (you'll see small bubbles forming at the edge). If not, enjoy the mix as an Impatient Pickle.

shokutaku tsukémono ki pickle press (pictured above)