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SWEET AND SOUR RED CABBAGE

A simple stir-fried cabbage that is good hot and even better cold. Soft but not watery, the cabbage is mildly sweet and sour. Because of the vinegar, it retains a lovely bright-red color. When the cabbage is chilled, the texture hardens to a light crispness. *Serves 4 or more.*

1 small head red cabbage, about 1½ pounds	2 tablespoons cider vinegar
3 tablespoons oil	2 tablespoons sugar
1 medium clove garlic, lightly smashed and peeled	½ cup water
1 teaspoon salt	2 tablespoons light soy sauce
	2 teaspoons sesame oil

Discard the cabbage's tough outer leaves and cut off the stem. Quarter the cabbage and cut out the core. Shred the leaves as for cole slaw. Toss the shreds in a colander to separate; then rinse and shake dry (do not do this until shortly before the stir-frying).

Heat a wok or large, heavy skillet over high heat until hot; add the oil, swirl, and heat for 30 seconds. Press the garlic in the oil, then scatter in the cabbage and stir and toss rapidly until the shreds are glistening with oil. Add the salt and stir; then add the vinegar. As the cabbage brightens from deep purple to vivid red, add the sugar and toss to mingle. Pour in the water, even out the cabbage, cover, and steam-cook vigorously for about 3 minutes, until the pan begins to crackle.

Uncover, add the soy sauce, and stir in folding motions until there is hardly any liquid in the pan. Sprinkle in the sesame oil, give a few big turns, and pour into a serving dish.