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MARCH 2024



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The Meal

By Amber Gibson
Photography by Casey Wilson



Of Cabbages and Kings

At Denver's Sắp Sữa, chef-owners Anthony "Ni" Nguyen and Anna Nguyen serve Vietnamese-American cuisine, often inspired by Ni's first-generation childhood in Southern California. Take this *bắp cải luộc*, a version of a modest boiled cabbage dish his mother used to prepare after a hard day's work. "This is the first dish that Anna and I ever worked on for Sắp Sữa," he says. "It's unassuming but really defines our style—reinventing humble dishes in a way that expresses our artistry."



- Ni confits the **cabbage** in grapeseed oil until it's soft but not mushy, then chars it hard in a cast-iron pan. "Once it develops the golden crust, we take it just a little bit further for the perfect char," he says.

- Anna worked for Nancy Silverton at Osteria Mozza in Los Angeles, and Sắp Sữa uses the famed chef's recipe for **anchovy breadcrumbs**. "We asked for her blessing when we opened," Ni says. End pieces of bread (from GetRight's Bakery, in the Denver suburb of Wheat Ridge) are cubed, soaked in *bagna càuda*, and baked.

- For the **egg-yolk sauce**, the chefs mix hard-boiled yolks with Hellmann's mayonnaise, fish sauce, salt, and lemon juice, then spin the mixture in a Robot-Coupe food processor until it's smooth.

- The finishing touch on this simple dish is perfectly diced chives strewn across the plate. "**Chives** are so delicate and delicious," Ni says.