Cast Iron Cabbage Baked in Tinga Sauce
Time: 2 hours 45 minutes (+ 1 hour if making tinga sauce, can be made ahead)
Yield: Serves 4

The cabbage is cooked until melty and soft. The sauce permeates the inner leaves, but reduces and caramelizes on its outer surface. I love this spicy, tinga, made with everyday chipotle in adobo, but you can also use whatever tomato sauce you have in your pantry -- just keep an eye on it as it cooks, since all sauces will have different level of water content, and some may reduce faster than others.

Note: save excess chipotle in adobo in single serving portions in the freezer for later use.

Tinga Sauce
Time: 1 hour
Yield: 3 cups sauce

Beyond cabbage, use this sauce to braise chicken, or as a marinade for roasted carrots (carrots tinga make for a great vegetarian taco filling).

2 small red onions, peeled and quartered
7 garlic cloves, skin-on
¼ cup (60 ml) olive oil
1 teaspoon Kosher salt
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
2 cups (480 ml) canned whole, peeled tomatoes
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
1 ½ cups (360 ml) chicken or vegetable broth
2 tablespoons roughly chopped chipotle chiles in adobo
2 whole cloves
½ teaspoon dried oregano

Heat a large cast iron pan over high heat. When the pan is hot, add the garlic in its skin and the onion, cut side down. Cook the garlic until the skin starts to brown and it feels halfway softened, careful not to burn the flesh. Cook the onion 15 minutes, until charred on both sides, allowing the quarters to fall apart. Remove to a plate. Peel the garlic.

Allow the pan to cool for five minutes. Return to a medium low heat and add the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the ginger, the peeled garlic and the onion. Sauté for three minutes, until the ginger just starts to brown. Add the remaining ingredients, stirring them together and raising the heat to high. Bring to a boil, lower to a simmer for 30 minutes. Transfer to a blender and blend until smooth.

For the Cabbage:

1 batch tinga sauce (3 cups), recipe above

1 medium green or red cabbage (2 lb 13 oz)
¼ cup (60 mL) grapeseed or avocado oil
2 cups thinly sliced red onion
3 tablespoons olive oil
¾ teaspoon Kosher salt, divided
Goat cheese (optional), for serving

Preheat the oven to 375°F (191°C).

Slice the cabbage in half from top to root-end. Halve each piece to create four equal wedges, each held together by its core.

Place a large Dutch oven over high heat. When the pan is hot, add ¼ cup of grapeseed oil. Sear the cabbage for 3 minutes on each cut side until golden brown. Flip to sear the outer surface of the cabbage for an additional 3-5 minutes before removing to a plate. Season the wedges with ½ teaspoon of Kosher salt.

Lower the heat to medium and add the olive oil to the pan. Sauté the onions with ¼ teaspoon of Kosher salt for 15 minutes until lightly browned and cooked through. Add the tinga sauce and raise the flame to high, stirring until it starts to bubble. Nestle the cabbage into the pan, cut sides down, and spoon sauce over top.

Cook on the center rack, uncovered, for 1 hour. After 30 minutes, spoon more sauce over the cabbage. After 1 hour, lower the heat to 300° F and cook for an additional 30 minutes until the cabbage is tender all the way through (poke it with a paring knife). If the sauce is looking dry at this point, stir ¼ cup of broth into the pan.

Remove the pot from the oven and stud the surface of the dish with mounds of goat cheese, if using. Serve while warm.