

# Yeti's Fermented Vegetables

## Kraut / Kimchi

**Step 1:** Gather ingredients and materials:

- ✓ Canning jars (quart or larger) and lids, along with smaller jars to act as weights
- ✓ Approximately 1 head of cabbage per half gallon
- ✓ Sea salt or rock/crystal salt (mineral-rich, unrefined salts are ideal)
- ✓ Spring water, filtered water or de-chlorinated tap water
- ✓ A large, sharp knife, cabbage shredder, or food processor
- ✓ Hands, fingers and/or a wooden spoon or masher

**Step 2:** Pull off outer leaves, toss any gross ones and set the rest aside. Rinse with clean water. Remove stalk and slice cabbage into shreds with a knife or chop roughly in food processor.

**Step 3:** Start packing the cabbage into your jar(s). Squeeze it as you're packing to start working the juices out that will aid in fermentation, and then pack it down with your fingers, a wooden spoon, or a masher. Starting in a large bowl with layers of salt and cabbage a half hour before will help get the juices flowing but I generally do everything in the fermentation vessel.

**Step 4:** Every couple of layers (each layer should be approximately 2-3 inches), add some salt. You don't need to add a lot, but at least enough to lightly cover the layer of cabbage. You can adjust the amount to taste for future batches. Pack tightly to eliminate air pockets until you have 2-3 inches of headspace. Place a smaller jar filled with water in the opening and press down until liquid rises above the vegetables. Top with an outer leaf pressed down with the weight jar.

**Step 5:** Place the jars in a warm (60-70 F), dark corner in a cookie sheet or pan to catch spillage. It should take 2-3 days before any noticeable fermentation occurs. You may need to press the cabbage down as it settles. It's fine to leave it for a while, but if any white film (yeast) or mold develops on the top of the liquid, just skim it off. Everything underneath will still be good.

**Step 6:** Check them once in a while to skim off any scum and taste. If you open a jar and like it how it is, eat it and put the rest in the fridge. It should last for a while (weeks to months) in the pantry, though, as fermentation is a natural preservative. If you like the flavor, start eating it now. It will go through changes as it ages. Moving it to the refrigerator will slow fermentation down substantially, keeping for a year or longer.

**Troubleshooting & Funkiness:** Slime happens, and is fine, but slime and any "funky" flavors will dissipate if left in the refrigerator for a couple of days. An odor of rotting along with mushiness isn't necessarily a bad thing. German kraut is traditionally eaten this way. You can avoid this by not allowing it to ferment for too long in temperatures of 80 F or above. Use common sense and toss it if the smell or flavor frighten you. Remember, fermentation is *safe*!

**Yetichi Variation:** Kimchi is a traditional Korean dish similar to sauerkraut but with extra spices. Many cultures have cabbage fermentation traditions. Being a yeti, I like to make *yetichi* by adding whatever I think sounds good to spice up my krauts. Some suggested additions for yetichi and beyond are: radishes, carrots, garlic, onions, ginger, peppers, horseradish, wine (for *weinkraut*), you name it. Traditional kimchi is made with fish sauce (a couple of teaspoons per quart jar). Just be sure you use fish sauce without preservatives added to keep it from hindering fermentation. Experiment with combinations and quantities until you find a combo that works for you.

## *Yeti's Fermented Vegetables*

### **Dilly Beans**

This recipe is traditionally made with only beans, dill, and brine, but feel free to experiment to your heart's desire. You can use just green beans (or any kind of wax bean, be it green, yellow, purple or polka dot) for traditional dilly beans, or get creative and add any firm-skinned, dense vegetable. Other than water and salt (AKA brine) and dill (dried/fresh; seeds/flowers/stalks), the rest of the ingredients are up to you. I recommend adding chopped garlic or ginger, onions, and pepper (black or red; dried and ground or fresh). You'll want to vary the amounts to taste as you experiment over time. These are my recommendations for the amounts to add to a quart jar:

- ✓ Canning jars (quart or larger), along with smaller jars for weights
- ✓ Beans and other vegetables with stems, strings, etc. removed and chopped to reach about an inch below the lip of the jar; young, tender beans are best for optimal crispness
- ✓ 2-6 cloves garlic, lightly mashed
- ✓ 1-3 nice-sized sprigs of fresh dill or 1-2 tbsp dried
- ✓ A couple of dill flower heads or 1 tsp dried dill seed
- ✓ Red or green chili (however much you can handle)
- ✓ 1 tsp peppercorns (optional)
- ✓ 1 tsp celery seed (optional)
- ✓ 4-5 tbsps. sea salt or rock/crystal salt (without anti-caking agent)
- ✓ Water
- ✓ High-tannin leaves (oak, grape, horseradish, hops, raspberry) for crispness

**Step 1:** Fill jar halfway with spring or filtered / de-chlorinated tap water (de-chlorinate by boiling and cooling or setting out uncovered for a few hours). Add salt and spices and stir.

**Step 2:** Rinse vegetables and cut to proper length for ensuring they're fully covered with brine. Carrots can be used whole (peeled and with ends chopped) or cut into spears. Cut squash, zucchini or cucumbers into spears and remove soft center (which can become very mushy).

**Step 3:** Pack vegetables into jar as tightly as possible, trimming the ends of any that may rise above the brine. Try to keep them all a bit below the neck (not the lip) of the jar.

**Step 4:** Pour in remaining water to just cover vegetables, cover with a leaf and add a weight. A food-grade zipper-storage bag filled with water will work in place of a smaller jar. A few things may float to the top. Ignore them or remove them. Don't fret.

**Step 5:** Store, watch, and sample. Place the jars in a warm (60-70 F), dark corner on a shallow pan, cookie sheet or dish towel. Check daily or every couple of days. Within 3-4 days you can remove the weight, skim off any floaters or scum and, if you desire, sample. Once you start removing vegetables you'll increase the chances of having others rise to the surface. Within 1-2 weeks, the brine should turn cloudy. This means your vegetables are "pickled." Taste often; the more they sit the mushier they get. If you like how they taste, eat them or put a lid on the jar and move them to a refrigerator. Never leave in a warm area with a tightly closed lid unless you like pickle grenades. They can keep for several months (even a year or more) in a refrigerator or cellar but will eventually break down enough to be inedible. They'll be perfectly safe to eat at any time unless significant mold develops.

## *Yeti's Fermented Vegetables*

### **Sour Pickles**

These are simply pickles that are made through fermentation rather than preserving in vinegar through canning as most of us are accustomed to. Hot-packing vegetables into jars with vinegar may preserve them longer, but it also kills off a lot of beneficial bacteria and (if not done right) increases the chances that harmful bacteria will thrive, such as *C. botulinum*, which causes botulism. This bacteria is stressed by, but also has a high tolerance for, heat. Botulism was a little-known disease until the advent of pressurized canning technologies. It *cannot* occur in a well-maintained fermentation medium, as there are many other beneficial bacteria that will keep it from happening. Properly canned pickles can be quite tasty but have little nutritional benefit, while fermented pickles are full of healthy probiotics.

**Step 1:** Gather ingredients and materials:

- ✓ Firm-skinned vegetables (cucumbers, squash, carrots, peppers, radishes, beets, turnips, onions, you name it)
- ✓ Sea salt or rock/crystal salt
- ✓ Lots of garlic (peeled and lightly mashed)
- ✓ Ginger root, horseradish root, dandelion root or any other edible root (optional)
- ✓ Fresh or dried dill seeds and leaves (a goodly amount)
- ✓ Grape leaves, oak leaves, walnut leaves, horseradish leaves, hop plant leaves or any other leaf with high amounts of tannin to keep pickles crisp
- ✓ Ceramic crock, wide-mouth glass jars, or food-grade plastic bucket (1 quart to several gallons in size)
- ✓ Smaller jar or, for larger vessels, a dish or wooden disc that fits snugly (not too snugly!) inside the fermentation vessel
- ✓ Jars filled with water, clean (and sterilized) rocks, or anything else that can be used to weight the dish or disc
- ✓ Cloth cover (cheesecloth, towel, an old Grateful Dead, Metallica or Waylon Jennings t-shirt, etc.) or loose-fitting lid

**Step 2:** Prepare brine. 1/4 cup of salt per quart of water is a good rule of thumb. Traditionally, very large amounts were used because the goal was to preserve for very long periods. Overly salty pickles can be desalinated by soaking in cold water before eating.

**Step 3:** Clean, rinse and chop (if desired) all vegetables. Chopping will increase surface area, allowing for a faster ferment, but could also cause them to turn mushy faster.

**Step 4:** Fill the vessel about halfway with water and add remaining ingredients.

**Step 5:** Press down with weight. If vegetables aren't fully submerged, add more brine.

**Step 6:** Cover vessel with a cloth or loose-fitting lid. The goal is to keep critters out but to allow the gases that will build up to escape.

**Step 7:** Check daily, skimming off any scum, and rinsing the plate and weight as needed. Sour pickles are meant for eating early and can be ready in as little as three days. After 3-4 days, taste daily until they reach your preferred flavor and level of crispness, then move the vessel(s) to a cooler location (or transfer to jars with loose-fitting lids and refrigerate).

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