



Fermentation for daily use



Tipp von Esther Kern



Avant-garde cuisine has sworn by it for years and now fermentation is returning to the home. Many are enamoured with Asian kimchi.

Here in Europe, fermented cabbage is known as sauerkraut. In Asia, cabbage is fermented to make kimchi. When it comes to fermented foods, kimchi is the trendiest by far. Petra Körner from the "Pure Taste" fermentation factory in Basel can confirm this. Together with her partner, chef Mateo Leoni, she produces and sells a wealth of lacto-fermented vegetables. "But in terms of sales, kimchi is out on top", she says.

To make kimchi you would generally chop the cabbage into large chunks. The cabbage is then mixed with salt and spices – gochugaru, a Korean red chilli powder, is key – and then lacto-fermented. Fermentation is a natural process whereby bacteria turn the sugar present in the vegetables into acid, among other things. In days gone by, this process would have been used to preserve the shelf life of vegetables.

These days, there are other reasons for consuming lacto-fermented vegetables. Fermentation broadens the flavour spectrum of vegetables. What's more, the bacteria help strengthen our digestion.



Fancy giving it a go? Try this recipe from Matteo Leoni at Puretaste.ch:

Ingredients

1 large Chinese cabbage
50 g salt
water
2 garlic cloves, grated
1 tsp fresh ginger, peeled and grated
3 tbsp Korean chilli flakes (Gochugaru)
1 large radish, peeled and cut into matchsticks
2 medium onions, sliced
1 leek, sliced
4 carrots, peeled and cut into matchsticks

Method

Quarter the cabbage lengthwise through the stem and remove the stalk. Then cut the quarters into pieces 4 cm thick.

Transfer the cabbage to a large bowl and sprinkle with salt. Using your hands, massage the salt into the cabbage until it softens a little. Cover with water. Place a plate over the cabbage and weigh it down.

Leave to stand for 1-2 hrs.

Rinse the cabbage with cold water. Leave to drain in a sieve for 15-20 mins.

Mix the garlic, ginger, gochugaru and onions into a smooth paste. Carefully squeeze the remaining water out of the cabbage and add the cabbage to the spiced paste. Add the radish, onions and carrots.

Carefully mix the paste with the vegetables.

Transfer the kimchi to a jar and press down until the brine comes to the top and covers the vegetables. Seal the jar and leave to ferment for 1-5 days. Place a bowl or plate under the jar to catch any overflow. Leave to stand at a cool room temperature and out of direct sunlight.

Test it once a day and press the kimchi below the brine using a clean spoon. Taste once a day. Once the kimchi is sufficiently aged (depending on your personal preference), place it in the fridge. You can eat it immediately, but it is best after 1-2 weeks.

You can also buy ready-made kimchi, for example at www.puretaste.ch