

Vegetables and Fruits

Foreword: Culturing (aka: fermenting) foods makes them more digestible, increases the nutritional value (especially the B Vitamins and Vitamin C) and restores healthy pre and probiotics to your gut.

These are simplified versions of making the various cultured foods. You can get fancier versions if desired. The goal here is to get you started. From there you can get as creative as you wish. You will find all recipes are nearly identical.

When fermenting anything, you will need to either use an airlock to release some air as the pressure builds, or loosen the lid every couple of days, or you'll have a mess on your hands.

Making Whey

Whey is used in making most cultured foods. It is simple to make. Take any unsweetened, unflavored, plain yogurt (homemade or store-bought, raw or pasteurized), and put it in a very clean cloth large enough to tie off and hang. A thin cotton dish towel, unfolded cloth diaper (clean, of course!), several layers of cheese cloth, or linen works best. Hang over a bowl and let the liquid drip out. This will take several hours. The liquid in the bowl is whey. The solids in the cloth is now cream cheese!



Put the whey in a glass canning jar and store in the refrigerator. Whey should last 6 months if clean techniques were used. Use good clean technique so as to not introduce foreign bacteria into your whey or other cultured product.

Making Brine:

6 Tbsp. fine grain sea salt, or 9 Tbsp. coarse-grain sea salt to 8 cups of water. Combine and stir until the salt is dissolved.

Fermenting (cultured): Basic Sauerkraut

Shred 5 pounds green cabbage (about 2 medium heads), and layer with 3 Tbsp. Salt (or more). In a strong bowl, pound or massage cabbage until it gets limp and makes its own juices. Letting it set 30 minutes before massaging helps, but is not necessary. After there is quite a bit of water, press the mixture tightly into canning jars or a kraut crock. Make sure there is enough liquid to cover the cabbage. If not, make a brine and add it to the mixture. Use a glass weight to hold the cabbage under the liquid, cover and let set at room temperature for a minimum of 10 days. Some countries don't consider it good until 6 months. It is not unusual to see mold forming on the top. Unless it stinks something awful, this is quite normal. Just scrape it off, and continue to ferment, or transfer to cold storage.



Optional: add caraway seeds, pickling spices, 5 Spice, apples, carrots, and other tasty variations. Also, don't forget to try purple cabbage. It gives a nice colorful change.

Lacto-Fermented Ginger Carrot Sticks

Peel and cut 3-5 medium carrots into sticks, and grate 1 Tblsp. fresh ginger. Stack in a wide-mouth canning jar. Add enough filtered water to fill the jar, 1" from the top (but enough to cover the carrots). Add to that 1 Tblsp. whey and 2 teaspoons salt.



Put the lid on tightly and keep it at room temperature (72 degrees) for about three days. You can leave it longer if you want it softer or more sour.

Kimchi

Rinse and cut 1 cabbage, 1 Spanish black radish, 1 turnip, 2 carrots into 1/2" pieces. Mix together in a bowl and sprinkle generously with 2 Tblsp. sea salt. Cover with filtered water, then cover with a towel and let set for 3 hours. Coarsely chop 3 cloves garlic, 1" piece of ginger, and 1 bunch scallions. Remove stem and seed from a Thai bird red pepper (optional: makes the Kim chi spicy) and mash into a paste. Strain the cabbage out of the brine mixture and reserve. Mix the ginger paste in with the cabbage mixture and pack tightly into a mason jar. Press tightly until its own liquids rise up. Then add enough of the brine water to cover the vegetables. Add a glass weight to keep the vegetables under water. Drape jar with a thin cloth and ferment at room temp for 1 week. If vegetables don't stay under the water, add more brine. Then refrigerate.



Lacto-Fermented Beets with 5 Spice

Roast 6 medium beets, in the oven at 170°F for 3 hours or until soft. Peel and cut into large matchsticks. Fill quart jar with beets, 1 Tblsp whey, 1 Tblsp. salt, and 1 tsp. 5 Spice, and enough filtered water to cover the beets. Put a glass weight on top to keep the beets under the water.



Cover the jar with a tight lid and let set at room temperature for 3-7 days.

Pickling (without vinegar)

Take a few thin, fresh, crisp cucumbers (or quarter, lengthwise, fatter cucumbers) with ends cut off to fit a quart jar. Add enough brine to cover the top of the cucumbers. Add 1 tsp. pickling spices. Cover with a tight lid, then shake lightly to mix the spices. Optional: replace lid with airlock valve.



Put aside at room temperature for 3 days. Whole pickles are best if crunchier pickles are desired. Quartering them exposes more of the insides to the lacto-fermentation and they can get mushy.

Pickling (with vinegar)

Take 7 or 8 fresh, crisp cucumbers with ends cut off to fit a quart jar. Mix 2 gals water with 1½ qts. vinegar, ½ cup salt (optional); ¼ cup sugar or honey and 2 quarts water. Put 2 Tblsp. whole mixed pickling spice into a piece of cheesecloth or other clean cloth (no metal tea mesh) and simmer until hot. Pour into quart jars with the pickles. Heat them in the canner bath and keep them covered with at least 1 inch of water. Boil for 10 minutes (or as directed by the instructions with your canner or for your altitude). The longer you process the jars, the more mushy (less crisp) the pickles will be. Cool and store in a cool location.

Sugar / Jellying

This is generally used with fruits. Jams date back from the beginning of time.

Dehydrating:

After washing and pitting fruit or vegetables, slice into thin slices. If desired, you can pre-treat to enhance flavor, such as dipping in a sugar or flavored mixture, blanching, marinating, or sprinkling an herb or spice on it while still wet, before dehydrating. Then dehydrate either in a dehydrator or in the sun. Be sure there is no mushiness left, or it will mold later.



Meats and fish need to be dehydrated at 145°F and above, fruits and vegetables at 130°F to 140°F, and herbs and flowers at 100°F to 110°F. They are done when they are dry to touch. It will feel sticky, moist, leathery, or hard, and soft. They will feel softer when they are warm than when they cool down. Therefore, always let the foods cool for a few minutes before deciding whether or not they are done. It is better to over-dry them than to under-dry them.

Salting

Salting is the easiest way to preserve vegetables. It's easy! Just add 1 Tbsp. Salt to a quart canning jar, the vegetables and enough filtered water to cover the vegetables. You can also add an optional 4 Tbsp. Whey for extra culturing. The salt not only keeps the product more crispy, but it also preserves the vegetables until the good bacteria starts to grow. Cover the jar and keep at room temperature for 3-8 days (depending upon how crisp or soft you want the final product (longer ferment time = softer vegetable)).

Oil preservation

A variety of foods can be preserved in olive oil, including vegetables, meats, fish, cheese and herbs. Olive oil preserves food by isolating food from the air and thus delaying spoilage for up to 1-2 years or more if properly preserved. Make homemade cheese balls. Strain your homemade yogurt or kefir by hanging it in a thin towel or cheesecloth and allowing the whey to drip out for about 1-2 days. Mix in herbs of choice (optional), form into small balls. Place cheese balls in a jar part way filled with olive oil. Finish filling the jar with olive oil and make sure all the cheese balls are completely submerged. Cover tightly and store in your pantry.



Raspberry-Mint Preserves

In a large bowl, mix 6 cups fresh raspberries, 30 finely chopped fresh mint leaves, 6 Tbsp. Sweetener of choice, 1 ½ tsp. sea salt, ¼ cup whey, 3 tsp. Pomona's Pectin and 3 tsp. Pomona's calcium water. Mash with a potato masher until berries are crushed, but still chunky. Transfer to a wide-mouth canning jar, leaving 1" below the rim. Cover tightly or airlock. Set at room temp for 2 days. Skim off any mold daily (it will still be good). Re-cover it. Refrigerate. I used normal pectin and no calcium water and it turned out great!



Fig Butter

Combine in a blender: 2 c. dried, unsulphured figs and 1 cup warm water and soak for 30 minutes. Then add ¼ cup raw honey, 2 Tbsp. Whey, ¾ tsp. sea salt and blend until smooth.



Transfer to a wide-mouth jar and leave at room temp for 2 days. Skim off any mold daily (it will still be good), and re-cover it. Refrigerate.