

VEGETABLES

Sue Pressey's napa cabbage kimchi

Traditional cabbage kimchi (pogi-kimchi) made with napa cabbage quarters, radish, Korean chilli flakes, fish sauce and salted fermented shrimp. From Sue Pressey's recipe at My Korean Kitchen.

Recipe author: Sue Pressey · My Korean Kitchen



TIME

2 hours 30 minutes prep + 6 hours salting (8 hours 30 minutes total), then 24 hours fermenting + 3-4 days chilling for fuller flavour

MAKES

7 litres, according to the author

Method: Salting, seasoning and fermenting cabbage

Season and ingredients: Year-round; choose firm cabbage heads

Storage: After 24 hours, refrigerate, ideally at 3-5°C. Keep tightly covered and use clean utensils to serve.

Ingredients

- ❑ 4 kg napa cabbage, tough outer leaves removed
- ❑ 3840 ml water for the brine
- ❑ 285 g coarse Korean sea salt or natural rock salt for the brine
- ❑ 97 g salt with medium-sized crystals, for salting the leaves
- ❑ 2 tbsp glutinous rice flour
- ❑ 360 ml water for the rice paste
- ❑ 141 g gochugaru (Korean chilli flakes)
- ❑ 540 g Korean radish or daikon, cut into thin matchsticks
- ❑ 1 tbsp fine sea salt for the radish
- ❑ 3½ tbsp Korean fish sauce
- ❑ 2 tbsp finely chopped salted fermented shrimp (saeujeot)
- ❑ 90 g garlic chives, cut into 5 cm lengths
- ❑ 140 g carrot, cut into thin matchsticks

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Sources and history on the Fermentarnia website
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- ☐ 42 g finely chopped garlic
- ☐ ½ tbsp finely chopped ginger
- ☐ 2 tbsp raw sugar
- ☐ 75 g onion, puréed or finely grated

Use a 15 ml tablespoon. Water and other metric amounts are reproduced directly from the author's recipe.

Equipment

- ☐ A large bowl, tray, food-safe bag or bucket, colander and saucepan
- ☐ A kimchi container or an airtight container with a lid

Instructions

1. Quarter the cabbage

Cut the cabbage lengthways into quarters and rinse under running water. Keep the leaves attached to the core.

2. Salt the leaves

Dissolve the coarse salt in the 3840 ml water. Dip each cabbage quarter in this brine and place on a tray. Sprinkle the 97 g salt between the leaves, concentrating on the thick white parts. Keep the brine.

3. Leave to salt

Put the cabbage in a food-grade bag or bucket, with the wedge sides facing up, and pour in the reserved brine. Seal the bag, or place a weight over the cabbage in the bucket. Leave for 6 hours, turning every 2 hours.

4. Rinse and drain

Rinse off the salt under running water, paying particular attention to the thick white parts of the leaves. Drain in a colander for 1 hour.

5. Make the rice paste

Cook the rice flour with the 360 ml water over a medium heat for 5-8 minutes, until thickened. Allow to cool, then stir in the gochugaru.

6. Mix the seasoning

Combine the radish, fine salt, fish sauce and saeujeot. Leave for 10 minutes, then mix in the remaining seasoning ingredients and rice paste.

7. Coat the leaves

Place a cabbage quarter on a tray and spread the seasoning over one side of every leaf. Use 1-2 small handfuls of paste per quarter, keeping the leaves attached to the core.

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8. Ferment and chill

Pack into a kimchi container or an airtight container with a lid, filling it only 70-80% full. Close and leave at room temperature for 24 hours, then refrigerate. Check the pH before eating, as explained below. Serve once chilled and at pH 4.6 or lower, or wait a further 3-4 days for a fuller flavour.

9. Cut as needed

Cut a small portion and keep it in a smaller glass container for serving. Leave the rest in quarters in the larger container, cutting more as needed.

Tips

Contains fish and crustaceans from the fish sauce and saeujeot.

Additional Colorado State University guidance: before eating, verify that the kimchi has reached pH 4.6 or lower. Fermentation time and chilling alone do not confirm this value. Discard the entire batch if mould appears.

How to serve

Cut into bite-sized pieces and serve with rice. Use more mature, sour kimchi in fried rice, kimchi-jjigae stew or kimchijeon pancakes.

Under the microscope

Why kimchi keeps getting sourer

Bacteria naturally present on the vegetables produce organic acids, including lactic acid, as kimchi ferments. That is why its flavour becomes sourer even though the recipe contains no vinegar. Moving it to the fridge slows fermentation but does not stop it completely.

