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BRINED APPLES with Tarragon

The idea for this recipe was inspired by the Russian Brined Apples from Linda Ziedrich's *Joy of Pickling*. The traditional recipe called for whole yellow-skinned apples, along with honey and mint, but perhaps what we found most interesting about it was that a rye sourdough starter was used to start fermentation. Intrigued, we began to play around with different versions—and honestly, the sourdough thing just wasn't for us. We replaced it with kraut brine, and then swapped out the mint for tarragon, which took the ferment in very different direction and gave it a decidedly French feel.

Rather than whole yellow apples, we found that a combination of Granny Smith and Honeycrisp slices accelerated fermentation time, and the firm flesh of these apple varieties stood up well to brining. We landed pretty far from the original, but we think the result is fantastic. The tarragon comes through nicely and complements the slightly sweet, salty, and tart flavors of the apples. This ferment pairs beautifully with cheeses, especially soft, pungent varieties like La Tur and Brie. Voilà!

MAKES 1 QUART (*see note on metrics/formulas below*)

500 milliliters distilled or spring water
15 grams [unrefined sea salt](#)
200 grams thinly sliced Granny Smith apples (about 2 medium)
200 grams thinly sliced Honeycrisp apple (about 1 large)
2 to 4 sprigs tarragon
50 milliliters natural brine from store-bought plain kraut

EQUIPMENT

Kitchen scale
[1-quart or 1-liter glass jar](#)
Weight (*see below*)
[Fermentation lid](#)

1. Wash and sanitize all your fermentation equipment, including a knife and cutting board, and set aside to air-dry.
2. Make a salt brine by bringing 150 milliliters of the water to just under a boil in a small saucepan. Remove from the heat, add the salt, and stir well until all the salt has dissolved. Add the remaining 350 milliliters room-temperature water to the hot brine to cool it down; set aside.
3. Pack the apple slices into the jar and insert the sprigs of tarragon between the slices. Pour the kraut brine into the jar over the apples. Pour the salt brine into the jar, leaving about 2 inches of headspace. Reserve the extra salt brine in a small jar in the refrigerator to use as needed.

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4. Place the weight in the jar on top of the apples and press down until the apples are completely submerged in the brine. Seal the jar with the fermentation lid. Place the sealed jar on a plate or in a bowl to catch any liquid displaced through the airlock during fermentation.

5. Ferment the apples in a cool place away from direct sunlight (7 days at 64°F is ideal)*. Taste the apples after 5 days to determine if the flavor and sourness are to your liking. If they're not sour enough, reseal the jar and let them ferment for 2 days, then taste again. When the apples are to your liking, replace the fermentation lid with a regular lid, seal, and store in the refrigerator for up to 1 month.

***Fermentation Temperature & Time**

Above 68°F | Ferment 5 days or less

65° to 68°F | Ferment 6 days

Ideal: 64°F | Ferment 7 days

60° to 63°F | Ferment 8 to 9 days

Below 60°F | Ferment 10 days or more

Excerpted from Chapter Two: Fermentation 101

Why Metric? Our Formulas Explained

[W]e have designed all the recipes using the metric system. We give weights in grams and volumes in milliliters, which also means that the recipes are designed to fill metric jars; most recipes being either 1-, 2-, or 4-liter vessels. But since a 1-quart jar and a 1-liter jar are close in volume (1 quart holds 946 milliliters of water and 1 liter holds 1,000 milliliters), you can use either type of jar for most of the recipes. Just note that if you are using an imperial jar, you might have a little brine or some vegetables left over, which is always preferable to not having enough. As we stated earlier, oxygen is the enemy of fermentation, and to limit the oxygen in your jar, it is best to fill it up as much as possible, leaving a very small amount of headspace to allow for gas production and liquid boilover.

We have made exceptions to this rule for smaller amounts of certain ingredients like herbs and spices, for which exact weights are of lesser consequence. Being off by 1 to 2 grams either way with an herb or spice will not affect the integrity of a ferment, so when an ingredient is called for in smaller quantities (typically less than 5 grams) we have chosen to provide imperial measurement volumes such as teaspoons and tablespoons instead of weights, in order to streamline the process.

Weights

In many ferments, the solids will float to the top, being thrust upward by the force of the escaping CO₂. If your lid or seal is good, the CO₂ produced will create an environment in the headspace (the empty space between the top of the ferment and the top of the vessel) that makes it virtually impossible for other organisms to grow there. However, if your lid or seal has leaks, contamination is likely. To prevent this, fermenters use weights or other systems to keep the solids in the ferment submerged beneath the brine.

We have found that **glass weights** are especially useful and fit nicely into standard and wide-mouth jars. The Easy Weight is a popular glass weight; it fits wide-mouth canning jars and has a built-in grooved handle for easy placement and removal. You can also buy plastic inserts, such as ViscoDisc Canning Buddies, which are significantly cheaper than glass weights but are most effective with ferments that have a lot of liquid. Through the course of

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writing this book, we have both become converts to glass weights, owing to the fact that they really do help achieve more consistent results, especially with longer ferments like krauts and pepper mashes.

A DIY trick we learned from Karla DeLong is to buy **thin plastic cutting boards**, which are cheap, and then cut them into round disks that match the inner circumference of your vessel at its widest point. You can then bend them to fit into the mouth. Once inserted, the disk will expand and act as a wedge, keeping the solids below the brine. Punching a couple of holes into the disk allows the free flow of brine and gases, while keeping the solids submerged. This method is especially useful for ferments that contain brine, such as all the brined ferments and the sour tonic recipes in this book, as the vegetable pieces have a tendency to float, and the cutting board disk keeps the pieces safely submerged below the brine level.

And finally, a **cabbage leaf** or really any vegetable placed between the ferment and the lid can be used to push the solids below the brine, and can be used instead of purchased weights. Any root vegetable, for instance, can be cut into a round disk 1 to 2 inches thick and placed on top of a ferment instead of a weight.

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