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WATER KIMCHI with Asian Pear and Pine Nuts

In 2009, we cheered when our local three-Michelin-starred chef, David Kinch of Manresa, beat Bobby Flay with a quick pear sauerkraut on Iron Chef America. The sauerkraut was not fermented but rather made on the fly with vinegar, which allowed the pear flavor to come through. Kinch's ingenuity ignited the idea for this kimchi.

In Korea, pears are commonly used in "water kimchis" (brined kimchis). Much like Kinch's abbreviated sauerkraut, the short fermentation time for kimchi allows the pear essence to shine through the acidity. The pine nuts add a layer of complementary flavor that balances the lightness of the kimchi with a dose of healthy fat. In Korea, this water kimchi is often used as the base for cold soups in the summer, and we've discovered that it's especially tasty served with a dashi broth over cold soba noodles.

If you can't find Asian pears, Boscs are a good alternative, but any firm-fleshed pear will do. Pine nuts can quickly overpower the subtle flavor of the pear, so don't be tempted to add more than we've called for here. We like this kimchi to finish with just a hint of heat, but feel free to omit the red pepper flakes if you prefer a spiceless ferment.

One day, we're going to bring David Kinch a jar of this kimchi, with the recipe and a thank-you note attached.

MAKES ½ GALLON (see note below on metrics/formulas below)

960 milliliters filtered water
40 grams [coarse unrefined sea salt](#)
600 grams chopped napa cabbage (2-inch square pieces)
160 grams sliced Asian pear
100 grams thinly sliced fennel bulb
80 grams finely diced shallots
30 grams chopped fresh chives (2-inch pieces)
30 grams pine nuts
½ to 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
2 whole cabbage leaves

EQUIPMENT

Kitchen scale
[½-gallon or 2-liter wide-mouth glass jar](#)
Canning funnel (optional)
Kraut tamper (optional)
[Fermentation lid](#)

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1. Wash and sanitize all your fermentation equipment, including a large bowl, knife, and cutting board, and set aside to air-dry.
2. Make a brine by bringing 300 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 660 milliliters room-temperature water to the hot brine to cool it down; set aside.
3. Put the chopped cabbage, pear, fennel, shallots, chives, pine nuts, and red pepper flakes in the large bowl. Mix the ingredients until well combined and pack into the jar (a canning funnel is useful here and helps to minimize spillage). You may have to press down with your hand or a kraut tamper to get all the dry ingredients into the jar. Pour the brine into the jar, leaving about 2 inches of headspace.
4. Take one of the two whole cabbage leaves, give it a quick rinse, and fold it up so it fits into the mouth of the jar. It should cover all the kimchi below and very slightly protrude from the top of the jar. Depending on the size and density of the leaves, you may need to fold and add the second cabbage leaf if the kimchi is not submerged under the brine when the lid is sealed.
5. Seal the jar with the fermentation lid. You should feel some resistance from the cabbage leaf, but not so much that tightening the lid is overly difficult. Place the sealed jar on a plate or in a bowl to catch any liquid displaced through the airlock during fermentation.
6. Ferment the kimchi in a cool place away from direct sunlight (5 days at 64°F is ideal)*. Taste the kimchi after 5 days. When the kimchi is slightly sour but still has some effervescence left (a bite should reveal a burst of bubbly CO₂), it is ready. If it's not sour enough, reseal the jar and let it ferment for another day or two, then taste again. When the kimchi is ready, replace the fermentation lid with a regular lid, seal, and store in the refrigerator for up to 6 months.

***Fermentation Temperature & Time**

Above 68°F | Ferment 3 days or less

65° to 68°F | Ferment 3 to 5 days

Ideal: 64°F | Ferment for 5 days

60° to 63°F | Ferment 5 to 7 days

Below 60°F | Ferment 7 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

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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.

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