

Fermenting

Preserve vegetables using naturally occurring beneficial bacteria

DIFFICULTY Easy-moderate
TYPE Seasonal batch technique
TIME 1-4 weeks to ferment



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Easy-moderate



TIME
1-4 weeks



COST
Low



BEST SEASON
At harvest peaks



FREQUENCY
Several batches
per season

01 Submerged in brine

Fermentation relies on keeping vegetables fully submerged in a salt brine, which favours beneficial lactic acid bacteria over spoilage organisms — the vegetables essentially preserve themselves.



02 What you'll need

- A fermenting crock or clean glass jar
- Non-iodised salt
- Filtered or dechlorinated water
- A weight to keep vegetables submerged under the brine

03 Method

1. Prepare vegetables — sliced, shredded, or whole depending on the ferment.
2. Mix a brine of salt and water (concentration varies by recipe, typically 2-5%).
3. Pack vegetables into the jar or crock, covering fully with brine.
4. Weight the vegetables down to keep them fully submerged — exposure to air causes spoilage, not just fermentation.
5. Ferment at room temperature, tasting periodically, until the flavour reaches the desired point, then refrigerate to slow further fermentation.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Mould on the surface** — usually from vegetables not staying fully submerged; ensure the weight is doing its job, and discard if mould is extensive.
- **Too salty or not salty enough** — measure brine concentration carefully; it affects both safety and flavour.
- **Ferment too sour or not sour enough** — taste periodically and refrigerate once it reaches the flavour you want; fermentation continues, just more slowly, in the fridge.
- **Cloudy brine** — usually normal (the bacteria doing their job), not a sign of spoilage on its own; judge primarily by smell and appearance of mould.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	At harvest peaks for crops like cabbage, cucumber, and other vegetables suited to fermenting.
DURATION	1-4 weeks depending on the ferment, temperature, and desired sourness.
MAINTENANCE	Check submersion and smell every few days during active fermentation.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Pleasantly sour, tangy smell and taste, with bubbling activity visible during the active phase.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Root Cellaring

Canning & Bottling

COMMON MISTAKES

Letting vegetables float above the brine, exposing them to air and mould

Using iodised salt or chlorinated water, which can inhibit fermentation

PRO TIP

Cabbage (for sauerkraut) is one of the most forgiving and reliable vegetables to start fermenting with.