

# Yeti's Fermented Vegetables

## Beyond the Basics

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### Fermented Mushrooms

Fermenting mushrooms is a tradition that exists in many cultures but some of the most popular recipes come from eastern Europe. Mushrooms should always be heated to some degree (by dehydrating or soaking in hot water) before eating or fermenting. This not only helps with digestion but draws out additional flavor.

**Step 1:** Gather ingredients and materials:

- ✓ Canning jars (quart or larger) and lids, along with smaller jars to act as weights
- ✓ A sharp knife and cutting board
- ✓ Dehydrated mushrooms (enough to nearly fill a tightly packed jar); thicker skinned mushrooms like shiitake (*Lentinula edodes*) and saffron milk cap (*Lactarius deliciosus*)
- ✓ 3-4 tbsp. sea salt or rock/crystal salt
- ✓ Spring water, filtered water or de-chlorinated tap water
- ✓ 1 tsp. dried dill, or 2 tbsp. fresh
- ✓ 1 tsp. caraway seed
- ✓ 2 tsp. black pepper
- ✓ Additional spices if you dare (I like to add red pepper flakes)
- ✓ 2 to 4 garlic cloves, lightly mashed

**Step 2:** Add spices and salt to jar and fill halfway with water.

**Step 3:** Chop mushrooms as needed and pack into the jar until you reach about 2 inches from the lip. Fill the jar with the rest of the water, continuing to pack mushrooms, until they are fully covered.

**Step 4:** Place a weight, such as a smaller jar or zipper-storage bag full of water carefully on top of the mushrooms. Be prepared to clean up some of the displaced brine.

**Step 5:** Place the jars in a warm (60-70 F), dark corner in a cookie sheet or pan to catch spillage. Give them at least a week to taste. You can taste them a bit earlier, but they may seem bland. Once the brine has fully soaked into the mushrooms and fermentation has begun, the mushrooms will be tangy, a bit salty, and firm. After a week they may start to turn mushy.

**Step 6:** Either eat them up right away (which is hard not to do), or put them in the refrigerator.

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### Fermented Chutneys, Relishes & Salads

This is where you can really go crazy fermenting all manner of things. The combination of ingredients you use and for what culinary purpose you use the final product will determine whether this is a chutney, a relish, or a salad. Essentially, you will be chopping, dicing or slicing random vegetables and then fermenting them. The texture can range anywhere from a sauce-like condiment, to a relish, to a dish of chunked, diced and sliced vegetables to be eaten like a salad.

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## *Beyond the Basics*

**Step 1:** Gather ingredients and materials:

- ✓ Canning jars (quart or larger), along with smaller jars for weights
- ✓ A sharp knife and cutting board
- ✓ Carrots, cabbage, onions, peppers (sweet and/or hot), radishes, turnips, beets, squash, rhubarb, garlics, basil, cilantro, various leafy greens... there aren't many limits here
- ✓ Salt, spice and everything nice (dill, fennel, chili pepper flakes, peppercorns, celery seed, caraway seed, ginger, cumin, mustard seed...)
- ✓ Water
- ✓ (I'm keeping this recipe intentionally broad; all of these ingredients will work well together. Simply follow the basic process and let your culinary creativity run wild.)

**Step 2:** Rinse vegetables and cut, shred, slice or dice.

**Step 3:** Layer in a bowl and toss in salt and spices. Vegetables such as carrots, onions, radishes and turnips will produce their own moisture after an hour or so.

**Step 4:** Pack all ingredients tightly into a jar or other vessel and press down to draw out as much brine as possible.

**Step 5:** Add water as needed to just cover vegetables and press down with a weight.

**Step 6:** Place the jars in a warm (60-70 F), dark corner in a cookie sheet or pan. This ferment is very similar to kraut, so treat it as such. Start sampling within a week and eat or refrigerate when you like it. Keep in mind that softer vegetables and leafy greens will soften much quicker.

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## **Fermented Salsa & Hot Sauce**

This is simply a variation of the chutney, relish and salad technique, except that you will be using ingredients that are the primary ingredients of salsas and hot sauces. If you're a fan of hot sauces and salsas, you'll never go back to the sterile, canned kind once you get a taste of "living" sauce and salsa. With pretty much the same ingredients, you can make salsa, tabasco-style liquid sauces and thick paste sauces similar to sriracha. It all depends on the amount of time you let it ferment and whether you separate the peppers and other ingredients from the brine.

**Step 1:** Gather ingredients and materials:

- ✓ Canning jars (quart or pint), along with smaller jars for weights
- ✓ A sharp knife and cutting board
- ✓ Thin gloves such as latex gloves (or be very careful when chopping and wash your hands thoroughly immediately after chopping)
- ✓ Peppers (any variety, from hot to sweet; fresh or dried)
- ✓ Garlic, onions, tomatoes (optional), cilantro (optional), fresh lime or lemon (optional)
- ✓ Cider vinegar (optional)
- ✓ 4-5 tbsps. sea salt or rock/crystal salt (without anti-caking agent)
- ✓ Water

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**Step 2:** Fill jar halfway with spring or filtered / de-chlorinated tap water (de-chlorinate by boiling and cooling or setting out uncovered for a few hours). Add salt, stir, and set aside.

**Step 3:** Gather peppers and determine your preferred ratio of hot to sweet (use less hot peppers the first time unless you're brave...). Put your gloves on unless you're brave (I've been brave before and regretted it...). Chop peppers lengthwise and deseed if you want to minimize the heat and maximize the flavor. Remove stems (some stem is fine). Chop into smaller pieces if needed. Set aside. When working with very hot peppers, the juices can work their way into your skin so take care not to touch your (or anyone else's) eyes or skin until you've removed your gloves and/or washed your hands.

**Step 4:** Peel and coarsely chop onions. Peel and lightly mash garlic. Chunk tomatoes (you'll primarily use these for salsa but they can be used in sauces too). Chop cilantro if using.

**Step 5 (Salsa Option):** For salsa, you'll want to process the garlic more. I usually chop it into small pieces or mash it in a garlic press. You'll definitely want tomatoes for this. Simply place all vegetables in a bowl or jar, salt to taste (no brine for this), mix well and cover the bowl or jar with a towel. While this is perfectly tasty now, I recommend making it a week or two in advance. The extra bite that fermentation gives the salsa is well worth it. When you're ready to eat it, add a bit of cider vinegar to taste, squeeze on some lemon or lime juice, and chop up plenty of cilantro. You can add cilantro early in the process as well but I always like the flavor of super-fresh cilantro.

**Step 6 (Hot Sauce Option):** Add all ingredients to your jar of brine. I like to add the garlic and onions first. The amounts and ratios are really up to you in the end. I generally fill the jar with about an inch or two's worth of garlic and about two inches' worth of chopped onions (for a quart jar). Pack in peppers and optional tomatoes, leaving no less than two inches of open space at the top of the jar.

**Step 7:** Weight and wait. I like to give my hot sauces 2-3 weeks or even a month or more to full develop their flavor. Experiment with time periods that work for you. The longer you wait the more the brine will turn into vinegar, which is advantageous to good hot sauce.

**Step 8:** You have a few options now. You can take everything and puree it in a food processor to make salsa, or you can separate most of the brine from the vegetables. Save the brine in small bottles to use as tabasco and puree the rest to use as a sriracha-like paste. Sample carefully and keep plenty of milk on hand! The amounts of heat will vary quite a bit. You likely won't need much to spice up a dish so a bit of this goes a long way. The tabasco keeps well in the pantry. Refrigerate the rest.

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## **Fermented Wild Greens Pesto**

While the traditional definition of pesto is pureed basil, garlic, olive oil, grated hard cheese and pine nuts, you can create a very pesto-like dish with all manner of ingredients. I like to head out to the yard, garden and wildlands in the spring and early summer before my basil is at its peak and look for various greens to be made into pesto. These can be anything from wild chives and green onions, green garlic, garlic scapes, ramps, or the many other green edibles that pop up. Garlic is usually a part of my recipe unless I'm already using a pungent allium. I generally use olive oil, but other healthy oils like avocado oil work as well. Cheese isn't always a part of my pesto but it's a nice addition. For nuts, I only use pine nuts as a treat due to their "delicacy" price. Usually I go for cheap mixed nuts.

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**Step 1:** Gather ingredients and materials:

- ✓ Canning jars (quart or pint), along with smaller jars for weights
- ✓ A sharp knife and cutting board
- ✓ Any combination of the aforementioned wild greens and basil if it's in season
- ✓ Olive oil, parmesan, romano or other hard cheese, nuts and garlic cloves
- ✓ Sea salt or rock/crystal salt (2-3 tbsps.)
- ✓ Water

**Step 2:** Gather greens. Clean, remove any brown or funky parts, rinse well, and chop coarsely. Place in a bowl, sprinkle with salt and toss until salt is evenly distributed. Pack tightly into a jar to draw out as much brine as possible. Add a few garlic cloves if you desire.

**Step 3:** Add water as needed to just cover vegetables.

**Step 4:** Weight and wait. I usually give this about two weeks.

**Step 5:** Remove and save (if desired) most of the brine. You can drink it as a healthy tonic, use it for salad dressing, or even fast-forward another ferment with it.

**Step 6:** Add greens to a food processor. You'll want to do this a bit at a time. Drop in nuts (about a finger-full each time). Sprinkle a finger-full of cheese (optional) and a healthy amount of olive oil. Pulse the food processor a few times until you've created a thick paste. Continue to add ingredients and pulse until you've got a thick, somewhat oily paste with most of the chunks removed. Adding more olive oil (or even a bit of brine) never hurts, as this stuff can get pretty thick. These greens can suck up salt, so feel free to salt to taste as needed.

**Step 7:** Pack everything into jars and refrigerate. I've found that this can be a lot more pungent than regular basil-only pesto. I put just a bit on sandwiches, add it to pasta for a quick meal, and sometimes sneak a taste straight from the jar. If it's too pungent, save it and blend it with some basil-only pesto.

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***Happy fermenting!***