



## PRESERVING THE SEASON

# Cabbage

This winter vegetable easily becomes kimchi, a bright, robustly flavored condiment that will last for weeks. **BY DEBRA SAMUELS**

CABBAGE IS A COLD-WEATHER STAPLE. Available in produce aisles year-round, it's at its peak in the cooler months of late fall and winter, when it adds crunch to salads, slaws, and stir-fries. Beyond those dishes, consider using it to make kimchi, a classic condiment found on every Korean table. Kimchi can be made with a variety of vegetables, but the most common type, *bae-chu*, uses napa cabbage, radishes, and Korean red pepper flakes. Our simplified recipe gets its start with a

spicy paste, which is mixed with salted cabbage, daikon radish, and aromatics. The mixture ferments at room temperature for 24 hours, at which point it can be eaten or refrigerated. It starts off spicy, crunchy, and refreshing, becoming hotter and more intensely sour as it ages (up to a month). Eat it on its own with rice, or use it in a variety of dishes (see the sidebar opposite). Before long, it might be a fixture on your table, too.

## kimchi

Homemade kimchi paste provides the flavor base for this tangy, assertive condiment. Use leftover paste to make another batch of kimchi or add it to stews, soups, or sauces for a spicy kick.

**Yields 2 cups kimchi paste;  
6 to 8 cups kimchi**

### FOR THE KIMCHI PASTE

- 1 cup gochu garu (coarse Korean red pepper flakes; see *Where to Buy It*, p. 94)
- 3 Tbs. dark brown sugar
- 1 Tbs. kosher salt or sea salt
- 1 medium apple, unpeeled, cored and quartered
- ½ medium yellow onion, peeled
- 6 to 8 oil-packed anchovy fillets, drained
- 5 medium cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 oz. (about 1 inch) fresh ginger, peeled and thickly sliced

### FOR THE KIMCHI

- 1 2-lb. napa cabbage, trimmed, cut lengthwise into 8 sections, then crosswise into 2- to 3-inch rectangular pieces (about 15 cups)
- 2 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. kosher salt or sea salt
- ¾ lb. daikon radish, peeled and cut into matchsticks (about 2 cups)
- 1 tsp. granulated sugar
- 8 to 10 scallions, halved lengthwise and then cut crosswise into 2-inch pieces
- 5 medium cloves garlic, cut into matchsticks
- 2 oz. (about 2 inches) fresh ginger, peeled and cut into matchsticks

### MAKE THE KIMCHI PASTE

In a medium bowl, combine the gochu garu with ½ cup water. Add the sugar and salt and mix well. Set aside.

**In a food processor**, purée the apple, onion, anchovies, garlic, and ginger until smooth. Add the purée to the red pepper paste and mix thoroughly. Refrigerate the paste in an airtight container for at least 24 hours before using. It will keep for up to 3 months in the refrigerator.

### PREPARE THE KIMCHI

Put a third of the cabbage in an extra-large bowl. Sprinkle with 2 tsp. of the salt. Top with another third of the cabbage and sprinkle with 2 tsp. salt. Repeat with the remaining cabbage and 2 tsp. salt. Put a piece of plastic wrap directly on the cabbage and then weigh down with four 1-lb. cans. Let the cabbage rest at room temperature for 3 hours.

**Remove the cans**, transfer the cabbage to a colander, rinse briefly, and let drain. Clean the bowl. Take handfuls of the cabbage, squeeze out any excess liquid, and put the squeezed cabbage in the bowl; set aside.

**In a medium bowl**, combine the daikon, the remaining 1 tsp. salt, and the sugar. Let rest for 15 minutes.

**With your hands**, rub the daikon strips until they're soft and pliable. Drain the daikon in a colander. Wipe out the bowl. Gather the daikon into a ball and squeeze out any liquid; return to the bowl.

**Add the scallions**, garlic, and ginger to the daikon and toss to distribute. Add the daikon mixture to the cabbage and toss again.

**Open a gallon-size zip-top bag**; set aside. Wearing disposable plastic gloves, use your hands to mix ¾ cup of the kimchi paste with the cabbage mixture. Be sure the cabbage mixture is thoroughly coated with the kimchi paste; season to taste with salt.

## What Is Fermentation?

Like sauerkraut, kimchi is a fermented dish. The chemical work of fermentation is done in low oxygen conditions by lactobacillus bacteria (found naturally on cabbage). These microbes convert the natural sugars in cabbage to lactic acid, which helps preserve the cabbage (by preventing the growth of harmful bacteria) and gives the finished product its characteristic sour flavor.

**Put the cabbage** in the plastic bag. Remove and discard the gloves. Seal the bag three-quarters of the way.

**Starting from the bottom** of the bag, roll the bag forward to expel air. Try to prevent liquid from seeping out of the bag. When you have almost reached the top, seal the bag completely. Unroll the bag and put it on a baking sheet. Let the kimchi ferment at room temperature for 24 hours.

**Transfer the kimchi** and its liquid to a sterile wide-mouth 1.5-liter (or half-gallon) glass jar and refrigerate. (The kimchi should be stored in one jar, not divided into multiple jars.) It will be ready after 24 hours, though some may prefer the more fermented taste the kimchi acquires after 2 to 3 days. Kimchi will last in the refrigerator for at least 4 weeks.

*Debra Samuels is a food writer, cooking teacher, and co-author of the book The Korean Table.*



Find recipes that use kimchi at [FineCooking.com/extras](http://FineCooking.com/extras).





A jar of kimchi, a bowl of rice, and a cup of tea—one easy way to enjoy this Korean classic.

## How to Use Kimchi

With its perfect balance of brightness, crunch, and heat, kimchi is a natural in many Korean dishes (and some non-Korean ones, too). While it's most often eaten with a bowl of rice (using chop sticks, pick up a piece of kimchi and fold it around a bit of rice, then pop the little bundle in your mouth), there are myriad ways to enjoy it. Here are a few:

- **Hot pot** Stir-fry kimchi in sesame oil. Add diced pork and water and cook until the meat is tender. Add tofu, heat through, and then serve with rice.
- **Side salad** Drizzle chopped kimchi with sesame oil, rice vinegar, and a little sugar.
- **Stir-fried noodles** Mix chopped kimchi with a bit of hot sauce, ketchup, and sesame oil. Toss with udon, rice, or Korean glass noodles.
- **Dumplings** Combine drained and finely chopped kimchi with tofu. Place small amounts of the mixture on dumpling wrappers and seal tightly. Steam or boil until cooked.
- **Scrambled eggs** Sauté kimchi until it develops a caramelized finish, add eggs, and scramble together.