

Making Cultured Vegetables

From the 7th edition Body Ecology Diet, by Donna Gates.

Cultured vegetables are made by shredding cabbage or a combination of cabbage and other vegetables and then packing them tightly into an airtight container. They are left to ferment at room temperature for several days or longer. Friendly bacteria naturally present in the vegetables quickly lower the pH, making a more acidic environment so the bacteria can reproduce. The vegetables become soft, delicious, and somewhat "pickled."

The airtight container can be glass or stainless steel. Use a 1 to 1½ quart container that seals with a rubber or plastic ring and a clamp down lid. Room temperature means 72 degrees Fahrenheit, for at least 3 days. We prefer to let ours sit for six or seven days. You can taste them at different stages and decide for yourself.

In the winter months if your kitchen temperature falls below 70 degrees, wrap the container in a towel and place it inside an insulated or thermal chest. In the summer months the veggies culture faster. They may be ready in just three or four days.

During this fermentation period, the friendly bacteria are having a heyday, reproducing and converting sugars and starches to lactic acid. Once the initial process is over, it is time to slow down the bacterial activity by putting the cultured veggies in the refrigerator. The cold greatly slows the fermentation, but does not stop it completely. Even if the veggies sit in your refrigerator for months, they will not spoil; instead they become more like fine wine, more delicious with time. Properly made, cultured vegetables have at least an eight month shelf life.

While it is not necessary to add a "starter culture" to your vegetables, we recommend that you do it just to ensure that your vegetables begin fermenting with a hardy strain of beneficial bacteria. Body Ecology's Cultured Vegetable Starter contains a very robust bacterium called L. Plantarum. (See our recipes below.)

Enjoying the Fruits of Your Labor

Once you master the basic technique, be creative. Try different vegetable combinations, and include dark green leafy vegetables like kale and collards. Soak, drain, and chop up some ocean vegetables like dulse, wakame, hijiki, and arame. Add your favorite herbs (dried or fresh), seeds (dill or caraway), and juniper berries. Even lemon juice can be added to the "brine." Try leaving out the cabbage all together and making a batch of cultured daikon.

Cynthia Hamilton, a friend of Donna's who lives in Los Angeles, teaches classes on how to make cultured vegetables, and she also sells them, calling them a "probiotic salad". Cynthia recently surprised Donna with a new recipe using kohlrabi, celery, garlic, ginger, and a green apple. It tastes wonderful! Don't be afraid of the little bit of sugar in the green apple. The microflora use it for food. The sugar will be long gone before you eat the cultured veggies. If you create a great new recipe you want to share with others on the B.E.D. around the world, please write or email us and we will happily post it on our Web site.

You may be thinking that making cultured veggies amounts to a big hassle. Well, it is possible to buy them commercially, but store-bought amounts can be fairly small and too costly for many people. You wouldn't be getting the "therapeutic amounts" you reap by making your own. So here's a suggestion: plan a "CV Party" with your family and friends. Gather on a weekend afternoon to laugh together, chop and pack the veggies. Make sure everyone leaves with enough containers to last until the next party. You and your loved ones will enjoy many meals of one of the most medicinal and economical foods you'll ever eat.

Two of Our Favorite Beginners Recipes

One important secret to making really delicious, yet medicinal, cultured veggies is to use freshly harvested, organic, well-cleaned vegetables. After washing the veggies, spin them dry. Clean equipment is essential. Scald everything you use in very hot water.

Version 1

- 3 heads green cabbage, shredded in a food processor
- 1 bunch kale, chopped by hand
- (optional): 2 cups wakame ocean vegetables (measured after soaking), drained, spine removed, and chopped
- 1 Tbsp. dill seed

Version 2

- 3 heads green cabbage, shredded in a food processor
- 6 carrots, large, shredded in a food processor
- 3 inch piece ginger, peeled and chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped

To make Cultured Vegetables

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Remove several cups of this mixture and put into a blender.
3. Add enough filtered water to make a "brine" the consistency of a thick juice. Blend well and then add brine back into first mixture. Stir well.
4. Pack mixture down into a 1½ quart glass or stainless steel container. Use your fist, a wooden dowel, or a potato masher to pack veggies tightly.
5. Fill container almost full, but leave about 2 inches of room at the top for veggies to expand.
6. Roll up several cabbage leaves into a tight "log" and place them on top to fill the remaining 2 inch space. Clamp jar closed.
7. Let veggies sit at about a 70 degree room temperature for at least three days. A week is even better. Refrigerate to slow down fermentation. Enjoy!

To use Body Ecology's Culture Starter:

Dissolve one or two packages of starter culture in 1½ cup warm (90*) water. Add some form of sugar to feed the starter (try Rapadura, Sucanat, honey, Agave, or EcoBLOOM). Let starter/sugar mixture sit for about 20 minutes or longer while the L. Plantarum and other bacteria wake up and begin enjoying the sugar. Add this starter culture to the brine (step 3).

Cost:

Starter	5.00
Cabbage	1.59
	.88
Carrots	.77
Ginger Root	.48
Granny Smith Apples	.48
Cilantro	.44
Bottles & Lids (1/2 of 12 pack)	6.50
Total cost	15.92 (6 jars)
Cost/quart	2.65 (per quart)

Price/quart on-line at culturedvegetables.net is \$18-19 (plus shipping).

Price/case (6 jars) is \$97.15-\$102.55 (plus shipping)