

I began my experimentation with sauerkraut actually.

However squash was plentiful that year, and cabbage wasn't, for me. (Besides I didn't even know if I liked sauerkraut.) (And I know I like squash.)

I figured that if the principles of fermenting vegetables were true I could ferment squash just as easily as other people ferment cabbage.

Thus began my career.

I found a recipe for Latin American sauerkraut in my nutrition/cookbook 'bible', and away I went.

Actually away we went. My husband helped, partly because I didn't just have squash, I had a gigantic 26 lb brilliant orange squash. We engaged our food processor, our chopping knives, and my giant bread mixing bowl, and this is what we did:

#### LATIN AMERICAN SAUER'KRAUT':

- a large quantity of winter squash, substituting for 1 large cabbage, shredded coarsely in the food processor
- 1 cup carrots, also grated or shredded
- 2 medium onions, quartered lengthwise and very finely sliced OR lots of green onions rescued from the winter winds scouring the garden
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- ¼ – ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons sea salt                      or              1 tbsp sea salt and 4 tbsp whey

In a large bowl mix squash, carrots, onions, oregano, red chile flakes, and sea salt.

Pound with a wooden pounder of some sort for about 10 minutes to release the juices.

Place in 2 quart sized jars. Press down firmly with a pounder until the juices come to the top of the vegetables.

The top of the mixture should be at least 1 inch below the top of the jars.

Cover tightly and keep at room temperature for about 3 days before transferring them to cold storage.

Note: another variation: I made this recipe with zucchini too, nervously, thinking it might be too soggy. Not so. Delicious. What a wonderful way to preserve all those glorious golden yellow and green zucchinis. What do we call this concoction then? Sauer-zucch?

I have since tried a recipe for

“JAPANESE SAUERKRAUT”, or “Tsukemono”:

This time I substituted purple cabbage for the Napa cabbage called for. My son and daughter-in-law fell in love with it, and I have since sent jarfuls to them in Vancouver.

- 1 head purple cabbage, substituting for Napa cabbage in the original recipe, cored and shredded.
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 2 tbsp naturally fermented soy sauce. (I love San-J tamari sauce)
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp sea salt              or              1 tsp sea salt and 2 tbsp whey

Place all ingredients in a bowl and pound with a wooden hammer to release the juices.

Place in a quart size jar and press down to bring the juices to the top of the cabbage.

Vegetables should be at least 1 inch below the top of the jar.

Cover tightly. Keep 3 days at room temperature before transferring to cold storage.

My poor husband has lost most of his sense of taste. But this next concoction does give him some pleasure of taste. He eats

his eggs and bacon with it. Wait till you smell it. It will please your senses, guaranteed. It is : ORANGE MARMALADE. Originally a lacto-fermented food. It was transported from Spain to Britain in this form to preserve it !

#### ORANGE MARMALADE:

3-4-5 oranges

1 ½ tbsp sea salt or 1 tbsp and ¼ cup of whey

½ cup water

¼ cup sweetener. I use honey

Slice oranges very thinly and then into quarters.

Place them into a wide mouthed jar.

Press down lightly with a pounder of some kind.

Combine the salt, water, and sweetener (notice it is not much) and pour over the oranges.

Add more water if you need to, not more mixture or you end up with a very salty marmalade.

Mixture should have 1 inch head space at the top...

Cover tightly, keep 3 days at room temperature, etc...

I quote the book here, because it goes against our North American sensibilities and caution...

“If marmalade develops spots of white mold on top, simply remove them with a spoon.”

I have done this and I am still alive to this day !

I was ordering a case of pears through seti one year, when a recipe for a fermented pear chutney caught my eye. It was wonderful. Very flavourful, and kept far far longer than the two months max warned by the recipe book:

#### FRUIT CHUTNEY:

- 3 cups fresh peaches, pears, apples, mango or papaya
- ½ cup water
- grated rind of 2 lemons
- juice of 2 lemons
- 1/8 cup of sweetener ... honey, good quality 'sugar', ...
- 3 tsp sea salt or 2 tsp sea salt and ¼ cup whey
- ½ cup pecans, chopped (nuts are recommended to be soaked first)
- ½ cup raisins ... I often use exclusively or add ½ cup dried cranberries, as northern fruit)
- 1 tsp ground cumin (yes)(in a fruit chutney)
- ½ tsp red pepper flakes
- ½ tsp green peppercorns, crushed
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 tsp coriander seeds

Mix water, lemon rind and juice, sweetener, salt and whey if using.

Peel and chop the fruit into the lemon mixture

Mix in everything else.

Place in a wide-mouthed jar.

Press down lightly to bring the juices up. Add more water if necessary to cover the fruit.

Note: I have found that the chutney gets a little dry if you add the extra cranberries without adding more water ... I guess they soak up the juices in the process of rehydrating. Maybe the nuts and raisins do too, so don't be nervous if your initial mixture is a little runny.

Same process as above ... but ferment for only 2 days before moving to cold storage.

Finally, I discovered a tonic, made from beets, called impossibly, 'kvass'. It is a wonderful alternative to juices and teas, etc. I feel nourished by it. Of course it has all kinds of health benefits too ... Great use for monster beets !

Again, the original recipe calls for whey as your inoculant. But I reason that not all cultures who ferment have access to whey ... and I looked around and found that sure enough people make this without. So again, I give you my version, using salt only:

'KVASS'(for 2 quarts)

- Beets: lightly washed, don't scrub them to death because the bacteria you want to flourish in the jar reside ON the beet: therefore, also do not peel them: coarsely chop enough to fill a large jar about halfway. (Shredded beets are so high in sugar that you will end up with a different kind of high !)
- 1 ½ tbsp sea salt or 1 tbsp salt and ¼ cup whey
- Water

Place beets and salt (and whey, if using) in jar. Add water to fill.

Mix. Cover securely.

Keep at room temp for... about 10 days if using only salt

... ..2 days if using whey

Transfer to cold storage.

All these fermented foods keep a long time. Even the fruit preparations keep longer than our cautious guides will tell us. There are wonderful stories in this book about their longevity, and yours, when you eat them regularly. The author observes that in every culture in the world, in the past, ferments were present at every meal, often in multiple forms.

So get busy. Enjoy. And add to your eating pleasure, your good steward's soul satisfaction, your ease in the kitchen (no sterilizing, boiling )( the 'k.i.s.s. method), and everybody's health !

And play with your favourite foods. If it grew, if it is alive, it has the necessary components to ferment practically by itself, adding flavour, nutrients and longevity to the food.