

Wild Garlic (and anything and everything that's looking worse for wear) Kimchi



I wanted to make this recipe as adaptable as possible to what you have in your fridge, so I've put the ingredients down in ratios to each other so you can scale it as necessary. It should make a medium sized kilner jar's worth - but if you make more, no bother, it lasts forever - but you'll eat it before then!

The core ingredients of any kimchi can be split into four parts. First, there's the cabbage element, which normally makes up the bulk of it. Mostly we use Napa cabbage, but you can really use any sort. The second part is the other veg that bulks out the kimchi, giving you crunch, sweetness, pepperiness, and other textures. I normally use carrot, spring onion, radish - but you could also use beetroot, apple, parsnip, cauliflower - I think literally any fairly sturdy vegetable

would do. When wild garlic is in season, I use it as much as I can, both for its taste and for the colour and texture it adds. The third part is the gungy, spicy fishy part that gives it that signature flavour, and binds all your veg together. The final part is the salt.

Although the recipe for the paste requires a couple of ingredients you might not have right now, it's so worth getting them. I've written it so that it will make a big batch, so you can freeze the extra and use it whenever you next make kimchi, which will shorten the prep for this massively.

Ingredients:

for the veg

1 cabbage, shredded. Reserve the outer leaves.

1/2 the shredded cabbage's volume of julienned carrots and radishes, thinly sliced beetroot, shredded spring onions

1/2 the shredded cabbage's volume of washed wild garlic leaves and flowers, roughly chopped. Stalks are great too. When it's not around, use mustard greens, pak choi, even kale.

1/2 cup of sea salt

for the paste

1/2 cup glutinous rice flour

3 cups water

1/4 cup sugar
1 pear or persimmon, something sweet and squidgy 2 fat thumbs of ginger

1 head garlic
4 shallots
2 to 4 cups of gochugaru (Korean red pepper flakes) depending on how spicy you likey 1/2
cup fish sauce
1/2 cup shrimp paste

Method:

First, shred your cabbage. Quarter it and roughly chop through, avoiding the massive root if using a crunchy white or red one. If using napa or savoy cabbage, where the leaves are slightly thinner, cut into quarters and then chop down the quarters into inch sized chunks. Reserve the outer leaves. Stick the cabbage in a big bowl, and sprinkle the salt all over. Time to get massaging. You need to scrunch the cabbage in your hands, squishing and squelching for as long as you can manage. The salt will cause the water to come out of the cabbage, creating a nice brine. This brine is the thing that allows your kimchi to ferment, without going mouldy. Gradually the cabbage will become floppy and not crunchy. Put a plate with something heavy on it on top of the cabbage so that it's submerged under the water it has produced, and leave it for a couple of hours. Meanwhile, shred all your other vegetables.

Next, make the paste. Bring your water to the boil and whisk in the glutinous rice flour. It should bubble and thicken. Turn the heat down and add the sugar, stirring it for around 5 minutes until it is thick and translucent. Take off the heat and allow to cool. While you're waiting, prepare the rest of the paste. Chop up the ginger, shallots, pear and garlic roughly, and put into a food processor with the gochugaru, fish sauce, shrimp paste, and the cooled gunge. Blitz till smooth.

Once your cabbage has been salting for 2 hours, remove it from the brine and rinse. Two changes of the water should be fine.

Finally, you're ready to mix. In your bowl, chuck in all your cabbage and other veg, and add about half the paste you've just made. The veg should be coated and saucy but not swimming in a red-hot soup. Put some rubber gloves on if you're worried about staining your hands a bit. Make sure it is really well mixed, have a quick taste for seasoning (sometimes I add a drizzle of honey or a splash of soy sauce) and then pack into a sterilised kilner jar. Leave AT LEAST 2 inches at the top of the jar. Do not do what I do every time, which is try and squeeze it all in. It will explode and you will get red juice all over your kitchen. Cover the kimchi with one of the reserved cabbage leaves, and make sure all the veg is submerged under the liquid. Leave in a warm- ish place. It should start to bubble after a day or two - make sure you open and close the jar (burp it) at least once a day to avoid juicy explosions. Once it has started to calm down again - about 5 days to a week normally - put it in the fridge and you are ready to go! When you want some, always use a clean fork to take it out of the jar, so you don't introduce any unwelcome bacteria.

I suggest eating it on its own, with a fried egg, with some peanut butter, and of course, in a cheese toastie.