

Homemade Kimchi

Ingredients

Vegetables

- 1 napa cabbage, roughly chopped (about enough to fill an 8-quart bowl before salting)
- 1 Korean radish (mu), about ¼–1/3 shredded and the rest roughly chopped
- 1 bunch chives, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 2 green onions, sliced (optional)
- 1 carrot, shredded (optional)
- ½ cup coarse sea salt (for salting cabbage)

Sauce Base

- 2 cups water
- 2 tbsp sweet rice flour (glutinous rice flour)
- ¼ apple
- ¼ pear
- 2–3 garlic cloves
- Small piece of ginger (about 2–3 cm)
- 1½–2 tbsp sugar, adjust to taste
- 1½–2 cups Korean red pepper flakes (gochugaru), adjust for spice level
- ½ cup sand lance sauce, or less for a lighter flavor
- 3 tbsp fish sauce (Three Crabs brand recommended)
- Optional: For a vegetarian version, omit fish sauce entirely and season with 1–2 tsp soy sauce plus extra salt to taste

Instructions

1. Roughly chop the napa cabbage into bite-sized pieces and place in a large bowl. Sprinkle the coarse sea salt evenly, focusing on the thicker white parts. After about an hour, toss or flip the cabbage so it salts evenly. Let it sit for another hour, about 2 hours total. To check if it's ready, bend one of the thick white pieces — it should bend softly without snapping.
2. Rinse the salted cabbage thoroughly under cold water and drain for at least 30 minutes.
Optional: Lightly salt the chopped radish at this stage and let sit for 30 minutes, then rinse and drain. Or skip salting and add it later when mixing with the sauce.
3. In a small pot, whisk the sweet rice flour into the water and cook over medium heat, stirring until thickened and slightly translucent. Remove from heat and let cool completely.
4. In a blender, combine apple, pear, garlic, ginger, and fish sauce or your chosen substitute. Blend until smooth, then mix this into the cooled rice porridge.

5. Stir sugar and gochugaru into the blended flavor base until evenly combined. Adjust spice to taste. The mixture should be thick, red, and well balanced.
6. Add the shredded portion of radish into the seasoning sauce and mix until coated. This helps balance flavor and adds a light crunch.
7. In a large bowl, mix the drained cabbage, chopped radish, chives, and any optional vegetables. Pour in the sauce and toss gently with your hands (use gloves) until everything is evenly coated.
8. Pack the kimchi tightly into a clean jar or container, pressing down to remove air pockets. Leave a little room at the top for expansion. Cover loosely and let it sit at room temperature for 1–2 days until slightly bubbly, then refrigerate.

Note & Storage

- Fermentation time depends on room temperature and may take longer in cooler rooms.
- Store in a sealed glass jar in the refrigerator for up to 3 months.
- Flavor deepens as it continues to ferment slowly in the refrigerator.
- Sweet rice flour helps the sauce cling better, adds body, and is naturally gluten-free.
- Small bubbles or rising brine are normal signs of active fermentation.