

## **Personal explanation about fermenting wild foods...**

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I suppose people interested in this issue have basic understanding on fermentation process - so I don't describe it in deep detail here. I just suggest that you use fermentation lock (water seal) and proper weight on top to get the quality result as it suppresses the growth of yeasts on the surface. I have prepared these also in open jars by pressing them three times a day under the surface by piece of wood and it's possible, but it's good idea to invest a bit on containers.

Traditionally before water seal was invented people used cloth (usually hemp, linum or nettle) on top of the foraged greens, wooden block (usually birch) on top of the cloth and washed granite stone on top of the wooden block as a weight. These were open buckets, which meant the cloth, block and stone needed washing after 10 days and yeast on the surface needed to be removed. Now there are ceramic stones and water seals available. Oak barrels would be great, but however, if you have a plastic bucket with water seal, you can use plastic bag designed for freezer filled with water as a weight instead of cloth, block and stone. The point is that the food stays under the liquid.

### **Now into recipes.**

With a fermentation root I mean here something like liquid from earlier fermentations, fermented cabbage, liquid made from sprouted grains etc.

On the border of zones 3 and 2 in Fennoscandia the summer is really short, so one has to work like a beaver to gather all the beauty the nature has to offer.

### **Equipment needed:**

- Sharp blade for chopping and chopping board.
- a water proof container (wooden (leafy trees), ceramic (beware of low temperature glass, since that can kill you), glass jar or plastic bucket suitable for foods).
- fermentation lock (water seal),
- long wooden pole (rather big heavy branch), top is carved a bit.
- if container cannot be used for mashing, then another f.e. cauldron or boiler.
- water, salt (seasalt, seawater (?), mountain salt) or/and fermentation root
- weight (cloth, block, stone, ceramic, or water filled plastic bags) on top

All in all, fermentation should happen in darkness. And it's good idea to soak the equipment in water for about 24 hours before boiling or washing with hot water.

And for picking the greens it would be great if it hadn't rained for 3 days, since water rinses the essential bacteria off the leaves. That's why these are not washed at all before preparation.

## **Basic springshoots #1 (in may)**

1. Gather springshoots of stinging nettle, cow parsnip (heracleum sphondylium & sibiricum) and willow herb. Cow parsnip's young shoots are light green and attractive, while older leaves turn dark green and are disattractive. Only young shoots are safe to use, but however - if you are sceptic, use Ground elder instead.

2. Chop 'em freshly in small quantities and immediately mash with wooden pole so the cellstructure is crushed and pour that much liquid that they stay under the surface (fermentation root or clean water mixed with 15 grams of salt per 1 liter of water)

3. (optional) mix with whole tree onions or small shallots and female flowers of willow (tree) which have not yet turned too fibrous, are light green/blue and look like big maggots and/or unopened small dandelion flower buds, and/or chopped wildroots (for example young creeping thistle is very good, also reedmace, burdock root etc.) if you wish ...

**NOTE!** Fermentation of Jerusalem artichoke results inulin to break down to fructose, so you get it sweet and sour. Very tasty if juiced with other stuff during the winter.

4. Pour fermented liquid diluted in water on them or salt water (15 grams per liter)

5. Put a weight on the top so they stay about 2 cm or more under the liquid surface.

6. Keep two days in temperature around +20 celsius degrees

7. Keep 10 days in temperature around +15-16 celsius degrees.

8. Move to cellar in temperature below +8 celsius degrees for a week or for a year.

9. (optional) can into smaller jars (fill 'em full and pour liquid until it touches the lid.

### **version #2**

1. as above

2. Not chopped at all. Fermentation root and saltwater (15 grams per liter) is poured on the plants. Wooden pole is used to gently press the plants in small layers so they get into thick layers and less water and space is needed. This version takes a lot of more space than previous, but is faster to prepare but not so easy to eat in large quantity.

3-9. as above

### **version #3**

**(traditionally used with nettle, creeping thistle and cow parsnip)**

1. as above

2. Plants are steamed so they get a bit soft.

3. Plants are mashed into container and fermentation root is poured on them so they get under the surface of water. Might be good idea to have freshly fermented ones present in the root.

5-9. as in version #1.

## **Flower power**

(this one can be squeezed into enlightening juice during the winter, although they can also be eaten on any kind of dish or with fermented bread etc.)

1. for this you need to sprout up grains (for example quinoa)
2. soak grains in clean water (or birch sap) for two days in warm room with cloth on top. (for example 2 parts sprouts and 3 parts liquid).
3. eat the fermented sprouts and mix dandelion flowers immediately after they open and are full of yellow pollen.
- 3b. (optional) mix with norway spruce young shoot tips, Scot's pine male flowers with pollen, field horsetail shoots, young yarrow leaves.
4. keep the flowers under the liquid for another 2-3 days in around +20 celsius before moving to cellar. If you use water diluted fermentation root or salt water, it's good idea to add also black currant leaves in phase 3 and keep 'em still 10 days in around +15 celsius degrees before moving in to cellar.
9. as in version #1

## **Basic springshoots #2 (may-june)**

1. as above, with onion shoots, caraway, chickweed, violet leaves (optional) etc.
2. mashed as in basic springshoots #1
3. mix with Sweet Cicely or Cow Parsley flowering stems (peel 'em and chop 'em to small circles) and freshly opened flowers full of pollen. Also flower buds of purple or water avens are nice.
4. pour some liquid (salt water 15 grams per liter or fermented liquid diluted in water) If you use fermented liquid, you can add less salt in phase 2 as it helps the water come out from the plant cells.
- 5-9 as in basic springshoots #1

## **Midsummer's preparation.**

1. Pick plantain leaves, lambsquarters, big dandelion leaves by ripping them so that leaves come to your hand but petiole stays in the ground. Now the scale of reagents is so diverse it's up to your imagination and what you have available.
2. Chop and mash the green leaves as above or don't if you don't.
3. In this version mix willow herbs (flowers are in bud, so use the top and remove few leaves and ferment them into tea or mix in with greens), stems of Marsh thistle (flowerstalks are peeled), flowers of violets, Caraway, Oxeye Daisy, Clovers (precaution! known hazards from Plants for a Future database: White clover has been known to cause problems for grazing animals, though this has never happened in Britain. The problem may be associated with the climate in which the plant is growing.)
- 4-9. as in basic springshoots #1.

-> also worth of trying: willow herb flowers (freshly opened) and nettle shoots (best to have somewhere fresh growth since these start to flower otherwise (do that either by cutting 'em down few weeks before (they need wet weather to grow back rapidly) or by harvesting actively (if you just take the top, the plant will divide and grow twice as many tops you have taken)

So ... by this far I think you got the idea and are able to develop local recipes. Every set I ferment is unique and I don't even try to count amounts of this and that. I have not yet found a bad combination of good tasting greens, but I have also few notions, that also some more bitter leaves can turn out into mild through the fermentation.

## **Mushroomer's fermentation (not for milk caps)**

1. Sprout up grains (for example Quinoa or other) as in Flower power recipe, or use liquid from earlier fermentations. Grain root is good as it's mild in taste and doesn't affect so much the aroma of mushrooms.
2. Pick cantharelles, boletus, horn of plenty, sheep polypores, funnel chantarelles, morels, hydnum -species or any mushroom that can be eaten without special preparation. Be careful in picking to get 'em clean from the beginning.
3. Drop whole mushrooms into fermented liquid (birch sap is great, since it has phosphorous and calcium which are not present in mushrooms) and keep 'em in warm room temperature for three days. Their texture softens and they just melt in your mouth! Superb vibrations throughout the body-mind-soul-planet !
4. Store in full jars in below +8 celsius for winter. The fermentation is short because you should drop them into strongly fermented liquid, so the process doesn't need to start from the beginning.

**NOTE!** Milkcaps make delicious salads if fermented, but they need short boiling and rinsing to make them edible. Also soaking three days in water by changing the water is said to remove the bitterness but I've not yet tried this recipe. Mix these with onions and cucumbers, pour salt water (15 grams per liter) on them. Keep two days in warm around +20 celsius and move then to around +15 celsius for 10 days and then to cold cellar below +8 celsius. Serve with fresh chopped onions and seed cream from pinenuts or sprouted sunflower seed etc.

## **Primitivist's porridge**

1. Pick nettle as in earlier recipes, cut and mash and mix with raw russula (brittle-gill) mushrooms (taste before picking, since if they're bitter they are not suitable for eating in large amounts - and don't mess around).
2. Pour fermented birch sap on 'em or use other fermentation root.
3. Ferment 2 days in about +20 celsius, and 2 weeks in around +15 celsius after putting into cellar (less than +8 celsius) ... the result will be green porridge as the russula mushrooms melt down. Sounds wicked but taste is superb and really nutritious!
4. The rest as described in other recipes.

So. Now you maybe have visions what to do with your local plants and mushrooms if you want to diversify from the dried uses ? I'm interested to hear about other acts of fermentation ? Is it found traditional anywhere else but in northern cultures (I'm not interested on animal milk fermentation) ? It seems the learning never ends, while the practice becomes familiar.

### **Ahh.. and about the recipies.**

Yes, well I once had a tropical staphylococcus infection which I needed to overcome by fasting and having only raw/living foods. Since I was not in the tropics, but in boreal and I got the infection in the middle of the darkest winter I chose to do it locally. After three days of fasting with water only I started to drink following:

- sprouted red clover seeds,
- parsnip root
- fermented wild greens and mushrooms
- fermented grains
- a tiny amount of garlic

and squeezed it through the manual wheatgrass juicer with love.

-> after ten days with drinks like this (and with fruit & berries) the disease had been driven away

Essential for the drink to be tasty is to have some sweetener, which I had in this case fermented Sweet Cicely seeds (not yet ripen) mixed with stems of cow parsnip (flowerstalks peeled) or fermented jerusalem artichoke.

-> drink with a lot of time (every mouthful takes you to paradise)

The fibrous leftover I dried in afterheat of wood stove to be eaten later as a bread with mushroom salad from milkcaps.

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Delicious drink from fermented wild greens

- apples, black currants or other berries/fruit
- fermented wild greens

Put them into blender and blend until it becomes smoothie type of drink. In this it might be necessary to use the chopped version #1 -style of wild greens. Apples can be fresh, black currants can be dried and soaked in water overnight and so on ... Also frozen berries do fine, but I like the dried ones better (except with blueberries the frozen ones are best) ... Sea buckthorn is superb. Also frozen rowan berry is great (once upon a time they were hanging in trees all the way till february, before birds ate them and become drunk, but now along with the climate change it no longer happens as they get moldy in the autumn unless picked.)

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And of course, fermented wild greens are good in that you can mix 'em with almost anything on any kind of food serving, cooked or raw. You can even cook them in sauces if you wish, but I prefer them like they are or as above or mixed with seed cream (even though nutty fats are usually better digested alone ...)

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So that's about it ... We would like to hear comments about how readable this was ? Are there traditional or indigenous fermentation practices known locally in you location ? Thanks for any communication ...

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This document is last updated during summer 2006 and was communicated through <http://elonmerkki.net/von-fi>

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If you have any experience to share in (biological) vegan organic growing and horticultural practices (such as forest gardening) on boreal zone (or elsewhere) please feel free to communicate with us. We are also interested on any kind of traditional or indigenous knowledge related on plant- or mushroom foods or fibre anywhere on the planet and are keen to compile more research on sustainable practices suitable for different climates. Maybe one day we'll see a sustainable silvilization sprouting out from the industrial civilization's ashes.

