

SPRING/  
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2020

RICHMOND MAGAZINE'S

# dine

Explore the  
culinary  
art that  
combines  
ancient  
traditions,  
science and  
patience

TAKE ME TO

## Funky Town

THE FERMENTATION ISSUE



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**COVER:** Photo by Tyler Darden, food styling by Diana Jeffra, prop styling by Nicole McQuade, special thanks to Ellwood Thompson's

# dine

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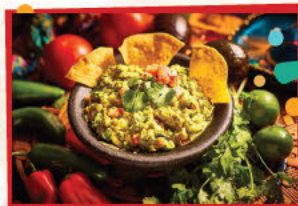
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# Art of *the* Tart

**MAHA KOMBUCHA**  
Ginger Cinnamon  
Sunrise



**COBRA**  
Pickled red  
onions



**DAYUM THIS  
IS MY JAM**  
Psycho Dillter



**PHOTOGRAPHER**

Tyler Darden

**FOOD STYLIST**

Diana Jeffra

**PROP STYLIST**

Nicole McQuade

**SPECIAL THANKS**

Ellwood Thompson's

A preservation technique dating back to ancient times, fermentation is flavor enhancing, umami inducing and gut healthy. Food and beverages alive with good bacteria transform into new versions of themselves as chefs, bakers and beverage makers take on the role of culinary chemists. Funk it up and dive into the fermentation methods that are responsible for everything from kombucha to kimchi, sourdough bread and beer.



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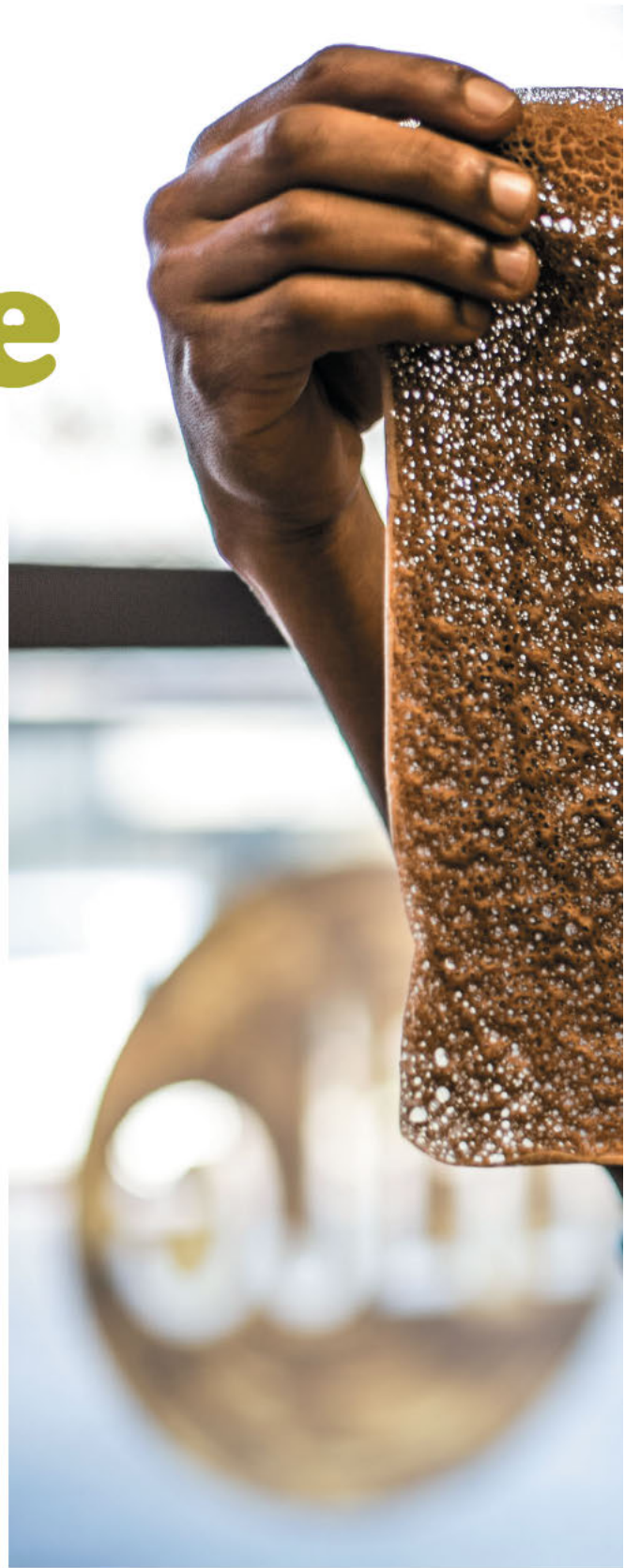
# Culture Club

Richmond restaurants showcase fermentation traditions from around the globe

BY GENEVELYN STEELE AND JOHN HADDAD

**CONSIDER THE REFRIGERATOR** — that insulated food theater — your kitchen’s protagonist. Only in the past 100 years of humanity’s 200,000 have we relied on it to keep cucumbers crisp, beer cold and meats frozen. Long before Frigidaire, there was fermentation, a gurgling, preservative technique dating to 7000 B.C. Rotting fruit sun-baking into hooch, or wild yeast spores parachuting into milled grains: Is that how fermentation started? However it happened, most cultures preserve foods naturally to prevent them from spoiling, from lacto-ferments like Mediterranean yogurts and Eastern European sauerkraut to Penicilium mold-infused French cheeses. Managed microorganisms, bacteria, yeast and mold produce taste — along with texture-changing enzymes — and extend a food’s shelf life.

The Korean expression “hand taste,” akin to “home-made,” speaks specifically to the personality of ferments. Hand taste is always different, like terroir. It conjures up the unique atmosphere of a particular kitchen on a particular day, the mold and yeast spores married with the cook’s personal touch. Hand taste is fermentation’s unique fingerprint. These local examples exemplify hand taste; each batch will be different, more or less sour than, and with a different structure, from its siblings.





▲ **INJERA** | Nile

Nile does what very few Ethiopian restaurants in the U.S., much less Richmond, are willing to do. They make their 100% teff grain injera, a spongy, sour pancake-like flatbread, daily.

Teff is more expensive and more nutritious than wheat flour. Rich with protein, it is blended into injera batter. Injera makes a tangy counterpoint to piquant, sun-dried berbere seasoning. Scooping up spicy doro wat with the three-day fermented bread is hand taste overload in its most toe-curling form. —GS

**> CORNED BEEF SANDWICH**

**Perly's**  
Crunchy, salty and tender beats the heart of Jewish culinary love. The fermentation situation at Perly's includes sauerkraut, pickles and pastrami, but what peppers their menu is corned beef. Preserved in a salt brine, corning a brisket with spices transforms a tough working cut into melt-in-your-mouth magic. Enjoy it with kraut on a classic Reuben, in a potato knish with braised cabbage or slung through a brunch hash. The unconventional "Jewish egg roll" tucks sauerkraut, corned beef and kishka, a fermented blood sausage, into a comfy fried wrapper. —GS



**CURTIDO**

**Pupuseria El Salvadoreño**

Pupusas, the Salvadoran street food, are as comforting as a grilled cheese. These griddled corn cakes stuffed with melty white cheese, beans, pork or the edible flower loroco are compelling on their own, but when topped with curtido, a lightly fermented cabbage relish, they become addictive. Instead of a quick pickle, this pupuseria's curtido is a full-on probiotic party in a side salad. Slivers of sweet onion, cabbage, carrot, citrus and saffron — which gives the long ferment a distinctive yellow hue — demand you tong seconds from the glass jars accompanying the hot pupusas when brought to the table. —GS



### LABNEH

#### Natalie's Taste of Lebanon

Labneh, a Lebanese kefir cheese, is traditionally made by draining the whey from yogurt. With a tangy flavor profile and creamy texture, it's often eaten as a dip or served with the Arabic spice blend za'atar as a breakfast staple. The lactic acid in labneh, as well as most fermented dairy products, makes it a spell-binding part of a marinade for chicken, lamb or beef kebabs, helping to break down proteins at the molecular level and delivering perfect tenderness. It's an off-the-menu item at Natalie's, so be sure to ask your server. —JH



### < CHAAT

#### Lehja

According to fermentation guru and author Sandor Katz, "Yogurt is the most popular fermented milk in the world," and it's an essential part of many international cuisines. The chaat, Indian street food-style snacks, at Lehja features a tangy, spicy and creamy yogurt sauce that pulls the whole dish together. Chef-owner Sunny Baweja says making homemade yogurt is a daily ritual at Lehja. There's more than a bit of alchemy involved in the process, a combination of precise temperatures, living cultures and careful attention to detail. Using part of the previous day's culture creates a tie to the past. —JH





Left: Blue Bee uses Champagne yeast in its ciders; Below: Find Beth Dixon's tepache recipe on page 21.



# Yes to Yeast

Fermentation is the foundation of our favorite beverages

➔ **IT TURNS OUT** we can thank one microscopic organism for a bevy of our favorite beverages: yeast. Think of yeast as tiny little helpers, and, like humans, they require sustenance to function. Yeast's food of choice is sugars, feasting on them during fermentation and burping out carbon dioxide to convert the sugars into alcohol.

Some yeasts are wild and occur naturally, like those found on the skins of pineapple that Beth Dixon, bar manager of Perch, uses to make tepache. A fast-fermented, low-ABV drink originating from Mexico, tepache can be used either as a non-alcoholic tippie or a mixer for a refreshing tropical drink.

However, wild yeasts can be wildly inconsistent, so many beverage makers

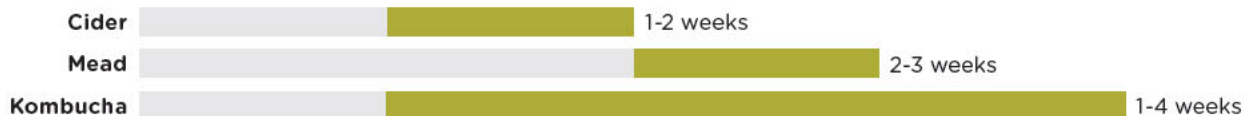
turn to pure yeast strains that are isolated from different grape varieties: Centuries of winemaking have allowed people to predict the results of the yeast. Most often, makers turn to *saccharomyces cerevisiae* (commonly known as "brewer's" or "baker's" yeast), a species of yeast that has become ubiquitous in the beverage world and can easily be ordered online for home use. Some *saccharomyces* strains are neutral in flavor, like Champagne yeast, while others add layers of complexity, such as pinot noir yeast.

At Blue Bee Cider, they use Champagne yeast, and owner Courtney Mailey says, "Like people under stress can be a little salty, we try and keep the yeast happy so they can do their best work."

Keeping the yeast happy is a balancing act, requiring the right combination of sugar, moisture and temperature to allow it to perform its magic and convert pressed apples into cider. Some apples are moister or sweeter than others, which effects tannins and taste. A few apples fit the bill perfectly, like the Harrison, while others such as Winesap need to be blended.

Bill Cavendar, owner of Black Heath Meadery, deals with a different set of fermentation obstacles. "Natural honey has got such a low moisture content that it won't ferment," he **YES TO YEAST | CONT'D ON P.21 >**

## WAIT FOR IT General primary fermentation times



Give The Broken Tulip 24 hour's notice to grab a loaf of their bread.

# Walk on the Wild Side

Bakers and chefs turn to wild yeast for flavors with flair

➔ **THE BATTLE CRY** "seen one, seen 'em all" is the resistance I fight when herding family to a distant pizzeria, bagel shop or bakery. My offense goes like this: "Essentially, dough contains just three ingredients, water, flour and salt, but think of how different it tastes!" Yes, there's disappointment. But, when the baker is nimble, it's worth crossing city limits to slather the creation with butter or bury it under cream cheese. Especially if that bread springs from local, rather than commercially available, yeast.

I discovered such zesty, air-pocketed bread one night at The Broken Tulip, a light rye sourdough, proudly displayed. Slices were cut as needed, which was often, and served with house-cultured butter and labneh (strained yogurt). I had to fight not to make a meal of it.

David Crabtree-Logan, chef and co-owner at The Broken Tulip, has made bread without purchased yeast — think of those little packets at the grocery — in every kitchen he's led, as part of a desire to master all aspects of his realm and to serve good food from a hyper-native environment. His starter, made from ambient yeast, is roughly 3 years old — about the age of the restaurant itself. Also referred to as the "mother," starters are dough that has

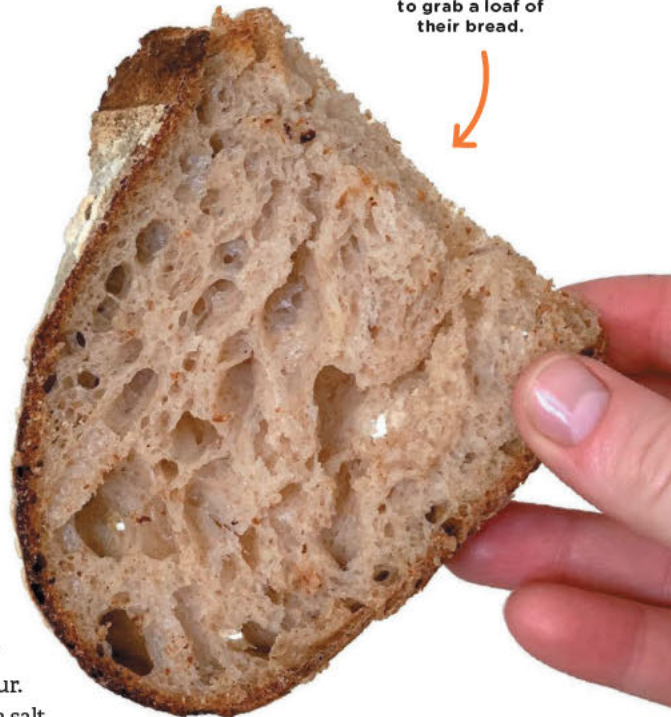
been left to ferment and cultivate wild, naturally occurring yeast. Adapting to whatever environment surrounds it, every starter will always be unique.

Crabtree-Logan says his loaves are "85% water in relation to 100% flour, of which 20% is Wades Mill Rye flour and 80% is King Arthur Special Patent white bread flour. The only other ingredient is sea salt and water. [The dough is] fermented for between 18-30 hours depending on the temperature in the kitchen and of the water in the dough, which is quite wet and sticky."

Crabtree-Logan has been known to give away nubs of that starter. Loaves are \$8 each, available with 24 hour's notice.

Even less common than wild fermented breads are wild fermented bagels, but you can find them at Ellwood Thompson's, Little House Green Grocery, Outpost or at the pop-up Chewy's Bagels RVA. Baker and owner Ashley Cricchio makes upwards of 700 hand-formed bagels weekly.

Chewy's bagel dough blisters under its crust. It's that transition, biting into an exterior that cracks rather than sinks under tooth, hitting a chewier, slightly acidic inner dough, that levels up the rounds. The flavors spin a complex web, rather than a single strand of sweet carbohydrate. Cricchio dubs Chewy's the "Richmond bagel" because it's smaller and crustier than chewy New York-style bagels, but less dense than a wood-fire baked Montreal bagel. Her favorite topping? Plain cream cheese and Moldova sea salt. —GENEVELYN STEELE



The yeast starter for Chewy's Bagels RVA

**HELLO MY NAME IS**

---

**Nurturing dough-lovers name their starters**

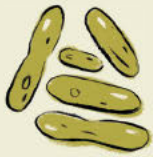
**"LARRY"**  
Ashley Patino, Pizza Bones

**"PERSEPHONE"**  
David Crabtree-Logan, The Broken Tulip

**"SERENA WILLIAMS"**  
Olivia Wilson, Freelance baker and co-owner of Brenner Pass

# Power to the Pickle

## It's Alive!



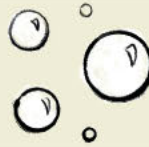
**BACTERIA**  
Lactobacillus is a common, benign bacteria.

Eats



**SUGAR**  
The lactobacillus eats the sugars that are present in the food being pickled.

Metabolizes



**LACTIC ACID**  
Antibacterial substances such as lactic acid, carbon dioxide and alcohol are produced.

Preserves



**FERMENTATION**  
As lactobacilli thrive, they suppress other bacteria that can cause spoilage.

## All Shapes and Sizes



**WHOLE**



**SPEAR**



**CHIPS**



**CRINKLE-CUT**



**GHERKIN**



**RELISH**



**SLICES**



**CUBES**



## Mason Jars

Invented in 1858, the jars are a ubiquitous tool for fermentation, keeping air out so good bacteria can thrive.

## Salinity

Oh you salty, huh?

- 1-2%** sauerkraut and kimchi
- 3.5%** half-sour Jewish deli pickles
- 5-6%** typical for most applications
- 7-8%** lemons and olives

## Favorite Local Ferments



### GREEN QUEEN PEPPER SAUCE

**WILD EARTH FERMENTATION**  
Your tacos and eggs are longing for this garlicky, smoke-kissed, citrusy verde bomb.

### TANGERINE MANGO WATER KEFIR

**OWL SPOON KEFIR**  
This effervescent, gut-healthy, probiotic-packed beverage is like sparkling water, but good for you – take that, La Croix.



### HABANERO BREAD & BUTTER PICKLES

**MATT'S DIRTY PICKLES**  
Sweet meets spicy (and, ideally, your next sandwich) in these award-winning chips.



### 3 Classic Pickle Pairings



**Charcuterie Board**  
GRISETTE

Sliced house-made pickles and firm gherkins are the glue that bring the cheese and meat boards together at Grisette.



**Pickleback Shot**  
FUZZY CACTUS

Leave it to Fuzzy Cactus, North Side's cooler-than-cool dive bar, to rock the classic house-made pickle brine shot for \$1. Whiskey not included.

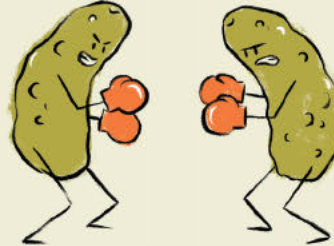


**Relish Dogs**  
GALAXY DINER

Is there anything more classic than a hot dog with relish? Bonus: At Galaxy Diner, you get a fried pickle on the side.

### The Great Debate

**Sweet**  
Vinegar and sugar brined, sometimes with heat, typically softer and perfect for topping a burger



**Sour**  
Cold brined with salt and spices, popular with people who like something to crunch into



### #NotAllPickles

Quick pickling, also known as refrigerator pickling, is when food is soaked in a vinegar solution for a day or so. This gives the dish a sour, briny taste without fermentation taking place.

### The Richmond Artisan Pickle Club

Established in

**2015**

**50**  
members

Read more online at [richmondmag.com/pickleclub](http://richmondmag.com/pickleclub).

### 5 Pickle Pop-ups



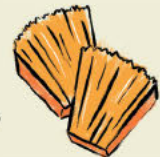
**PICKLED PLUM**  
Nestled inside this adorable grab-and-go rice ball, pickled plums pack a pleasant punch at Onigiri.

**PICKLED EGGS**  
Fuchsia-tinged treats from Charlotte's Southern Deli and Tapas are first pickled, then deviled.



**PICKLED RAISINS**  
At Laura Lee's, golden nuggets join a citrus vinaigrette, endive salad and roasted mahi.

**PICKLED PINEAPPLE**  
These tart fruit chunks appear in the carnitas, Baja fish and blackened tuna tacos at Barrio Taqueria & Tequila.



**PICKLED GINGER**  
A dressing with white soy, scallion, wasabi and pickled ginger brightens Heritage's tuna tartare.



# Kimchi Connection

Making the Korean dish links Seoul 2 Soul's owner to her heritage **BY EILEEN MELLON**

➔ **SIM WIMBUSH**, owner of Seoul 2 Soul food truck, stands inside Hatch Kitchen, her back straight, hair pulled tight in a bun, wearing a blue chef shirt. She grabs a towering pile of napa cabbage, its leaves glittering with water, before moving it to the cutting board, bringing the knife to the middle and slicing in a smooth, powerful motion.

She's making what she calls "mock kimchi." Unlike traditional kimchi, Wimbush chops the cabbage into small-sized pieces.

"My mom taught me two ways: the way you let it ferment, and the quick way," she says. While you can eat kimchi the day it's made, she prefers to wait.

After bathing the cabbage again and layering sea salt in the fresh, green crevices, she picks up a piece, demonstrating

how the the leaf snaps. After the cabbage sits overnight and the salt expels the remaining water, the snap will disappear, but the crunch will remain.

The first time Wimbush, 34, made kimchi was at Grinnell College in Iowa. It was a way for her to stay connected to her family.

"Also because of my college buddies," she adds with a laugh. Wimbush joined an Asian-American group on campus in an attempt to get closer to a crush, but it also brought her closer to her calling. "When they found out I was half-Korean, they were like 'Oh do you know how to make kimchi?'"

It felt like a test.

"I thought, OK, they're trying to pull my Asian card," Wimbush says. She reached for the phone and from 1,000 miles away, her mother guided her through the process of making kimchi.

When the club members and her friends eventually came over, Wimbush displayed a proud Korean feast of bul-gogi, Japchae with sweet potato vermicelli noodles, and kimchi — everyone's favorite dish was the latter.

"It was the first time that outside of my family I felt validated in being able to express myself equally as an Asian, as much as African American, and viewed just as being Asian — an incredibly validating experience, culturally and personally," she says.

Above from left: Sim Wimbush mixes kimchi; Wimbush shows Richmond magazine Food Editor Eileen Mellon how to make kimchi



# KOJI NIGHTS

Longoven unlocks unique flavors inside their kitchen that doubles as a funkatorium

## THE LONGOVEN KITCHEN

is a treasure map of ongoing fermentation experiments. A dry-goods shelf is crowded with gallon jars brewing misos and garums — umami-loaded sauces, such as Worcestershire and fish sauce, made from animal protein. There's a two-phase chanterelle vinegar made with wild yeast from The Veil Brewing and a chocolate lentil miso that exudes an intoxicating perfume of cocoa and earth. One jar of seedy green sludge — a vegetable-based riff on a garum — burps with a zesty aroma of green tomatoes, ginger, and basil. These are off-hour experiments with no definite purpose but to explore the limits of food science. This is what a no-waste kitchen looks and smells like, where kitchen scraps are exalted and saved for a long game whose prize is flavor.

Chef and co-owner Andrew Manning flicks the side of a gallon jar, and bubbles shimmy to the surface. "This one's jamming," he says, admiring his work. It's a shio koji, a fermented seasoning made from rice, salt, water and koji, a fungus used in fermented Japanese foods, like soy sauce. Manning might use it to ferment vegetables and to pickle fish. With the pureed solids, he could marinate duck or dry-age a ribeye. "You'll get a 60-day aged beef in like two weeks," he notes with the reverence of a surfer describing a gnarly wave.

Fermentation makes good sense to Manning, who first witnessed the art on a large scale in the bathtub-sized vinegar vats of Italian winemakers while cooking in Italy's Piedmont region for over a decade: "You get crazy flavors you'll never get any other way, and you don't waste food," he says. "The more people that know about it [fermentation] the better."

—STEPHANIE GANZ

## FERMENTATION ON THE MENU



House-made kombucha steeped with roses and wildflowers acts as a glaze for roast pigeon.



A funky beurre blanc on the tasting menu's "scallop, shiitake, turnip" dish starts with fermented turnip scraps.



The crave-worthy "seeds risotto" folds in a miso derived from sunflower seeds, which are right at home alongside chia, pepitas, millet and quinoa.

Wimbush aims to highlight both cultures through her food truck venture, where kimchi mac and cheese is a crowd favorite.

Growing up in Dinwiddie, her house was an alchemy of cuisine and culture. Her father, Morgan Wimbush, a veteran and over 20-year food service professional in the Army, and mother, Yong Wimbush, met while her father was stationed in Korea. Dinner often meant collards accented with "Korean goodness" — aka ginger and garlic — or Cream of Wheat spiked with kimchi for breakfast.

But, she says, "Being in a multi-racial family and living in a rural environment, I missed out on being able to interact with more [Korean] families."

Trips to small, mom-and-pop Asian markets with her mother offered glimpses of Korean culture, snapshots of people making rice cakes, always greeted with the same familiar smell.

Her youth is marked with that ubiquitous scent, the fridge a pungent collection of various-sized jars filled with mashed garlic, and kimchi made with sweet potato vines, a Korean water-

KIMCHI CONNECTION | CONT'D ON P.20 >

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#### < KIMCHI CONNECTION | CONT'D FROM P.18

cross, minari and perilla leaves.

"If you go into a Korean's home, there will be at least six different types of kimchi, (if) not more," she says.

Wimbush recalls her mother bottling fish her father caught, leaving them to ferment for fish sauce, the "eekk" sound the jar expelled when tiny air bubbles escaped.

"Traumatizing," she says, then laughs, shaking her head. It's the reason she doesn't use fish sauce in her kimchi, instead gaining the umami flavor from soy sauce and sea kelp.

Every time Wimbush makes kimchi, typically once a week, images of her mother's small frame crouching over a large mixing bowl in what her family calls the "kimchi squat," return.

While soaking garlic in warm water, a trick that frees the cloves from their skins, she is transported to her childhood living room. Along with her older brother and sister, she would sit for hours peeling cloves.

The nondescript "mmm" that would escape her mother while shoving a piece of cabbage rolled like a cylinder towards her mouth, inviting feedback from her daughter, is still audible. "That is a comforting memory, and now I kind of unconsciously do it to anyone around [when I make it]," she says.

Mixing the salt-soaked cabbage, sesame seed, Kadoya sesame oil, Korean chile powder and scallions, organic sugar, garlic, and ginger together, a rainbow of colors blend in the bowl. After a taste, she adds a second round of each ingredient.

No two kimchi are the same, each ferment has a unique imprint. With kimchi, she says, salt is a friend, and air is an enemy. Wimbush uses vacuum-seal, BPA-free containers resembling a makeup case, to ferment kimchi, a process that may take anywhere from weeks to months.

With no professional cooking experience, launching her food truck was a leap of faith, one rooted in tradition, and always in family, her sister and niece often by her side on the truck.

She rolls a piece of cabbage into a cylinder, handing me a piece. "Here, try this," she says, smiling. ■

< YES TO YEAST | CONT'D FROM P.14

says. "We need to dilute the honey with water ... to make it accessible to the yeast so they can do their job."

Beer faces its own issues, since grains, unlike fruits or honey, contain long-chain sugars that the yeast can't digest. Malting forces the grains to germinate and "rips the chains apart into simple sugars the yeast can eat," explains Brian Mandeville, head brewer of Fine Creek Brewing Company in Powhatan.

Temperature and yeast play a huge role in determining the fate of a beer. Bottom-feeding yeast, those that thrive in cooler environments, might produce a lager, while top-feeding yeast kept in warmer temps can result in an ale. Adding bacterial microbes before or during the fermentation process can lend acidity or sourness to IPAs and gose.

Ninja Kombucha turns to bacterial microbes to create gut-healthy concoctions. Owner Brett Nobile uses a 5-year-old yeast mother — similar to a sourdough starter — to impart the kombucha's distinct flavor. It also works to remove nearly all the alcohol from the finished product. Instead of the closed vessels used to ferment cider and beer, kombucha is fermented in open tanks, requiring constant air circulation to provide oxygen for the longer warm ferment.

—PIET E. JONES

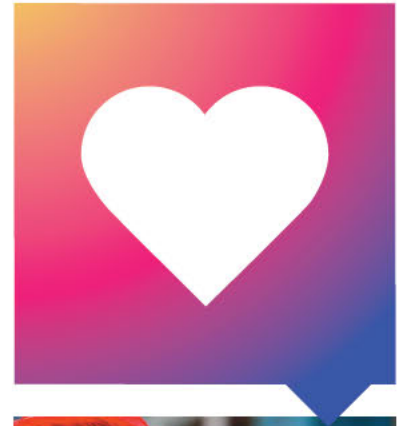
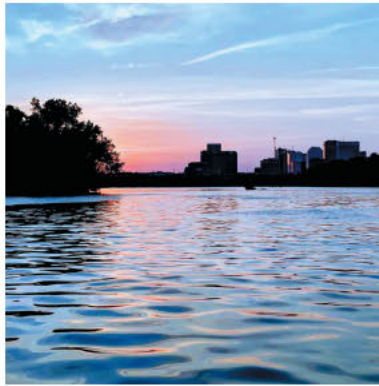
## Tepache

Recipe by Beth Dixon, Perch

- 1 pineapple, skin on, rinsed clean and cut in to 1-inch cubes
- 1 mango
- 2 cups Demerara sugar
- 2 2-inch knobs of ginger, skin on, rinsed clean and diced
- 3 Thai chilies
- Cold water

Add all ingredients to a large glass container. Top with water, making sure all solids are submerged, and stir. Cover the mixture with cheesecloth and secure with a rubber band. Let it sit for 1-3 days or until gentle bubbling. The fermentation time will vary based on the temperature of the room. Strain the mixture into containers with secure lids, such as flip-top bottles or recycled kombucha or soda bottles. Keep refrigerated.

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