

## Kimchi, Info 2 (Engl.)

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Zutaten für: 1 Rezept

### Anleitung:

TONGDUCHON, KOREA - 'You...Like...Kim...Chee?' Well, up until a few seconds earlier, when I looked behind the scenes at this assembly line on the floor of a freezing Tongduchon alley, I could say I had thoroughly enjoyed the Korean national dish. Kimchi stands on the threshold of fast-food acceptance with such multinational fare as hamburgers, tacos, chow mein, ramen, sushi, hot dogs and goulash. The variations are infinite, but kimchi (sometimes spelled kimchee or kimch'i) consists of basic elements of fermented Chinese cabbage and ground red chiles. Here in this alley of the icy Korean outback I managed to put aside my Western inhibitions against streetside food preparation and learn what makes those kimchi barrels tick, bubble, fizz, whatever. My instructor, without doubt, had never had a Western tourist stop to assess the steps up the kimchi food chain. She was the lead player in a drama starring five persons. With the limited English at her command, she spoke her lines well. 'Wash first,' she said while dipping half-stalks of cabbage in a plastic bathtub. One of the women split heads of chinese cabbage (in appearance, a cross between cabbage and celery stalks). The pavement was the cutting board. In an earlier stage, two women were taking stalks off a mountain that reached nearly to the roofline of a small restaurant. They peeled off the dead leaves and generally inspected the product. Nothing was discarded. The outer leaves were hung aside with some unexplained purpose in mind. The restaurant had closed for the night but no matter its entrance was blocked by a mountain of cabbage. Using the half stalk as a scoop, my instructor took up a bit of water with each and carefully arranged them flat in a plastic garbage can. The circles, leaves to the outside, spiraled up from the bottom.

'Now salt,' she continued, sprinkling rock salt on each level. 'Tomorrow we wash,' she said, capping the container and wrestling it aside in the afternoon gloom. Korean villages often lie within the folds of steep mountains. The winter sun must rise high in the sky to cross the eastern ridgeline. It disappears early behind the western peaks.

'Tomorrow we repack with pepper where salt was.' When would it be ready to eat? I asked the question casually, conversationally. Instantly I sensed a mixup of translation. The women looked at each other and giggled as my instructor reached into the garbage can and offered me a dripping, salty leaf. What else could I do? I took the leaf that I had only recently seen prepared in this very alley, and paid my dŭs. I hoped my smile was not too forced and my nibble was not too small. Finally the communication link connected enough for me to understand that by day after tomorrow this 'summer' kimchi would be ready. These vats - stored with only their tops sticking out of the snow would probably last the restaurant several weeks rather than all winter. From bulgogi - barbequed strips seasoned with garlic to bulkalbi, akin to spare ribs, every Korean main dish is served with kimchi. 'Everybody in Korea has a favorite kimchi recipe,' commented one Old Asia Hand. 'Some people add garlic or onion. I haven't seen any with pine nuts or alfalfa shoots yet, but that may come.' A catalog distributed by export-minded Korea advertises canned kimchi with differing labels of Chinese cabbage,

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radish, cucumber, white cabbage and pickled seafood. Coastal kimchi in Korea includes anchovies. "I usually ask them to hold the anchovies," said the Old Asia Hand. It's interesting to be in Korea during the major cabbage harvests. A "cord" of cabbage stacked like firewood will be dumped on every block, and the residents will come out and fill their earthenware kimchi pots. Kimchi is a major source of Vitamin C for Koreans. And they are a very healthy race.

Some other Korean dishes:

Kalbitang: a rich soup with boiled beef ribs. Pibimbap: rice topped with assorted vegetables and a boiled egg. Nängmyon: a bowl of cold buckwheat noodles served with vegetables, boiled egg and pieces of meat. This is a summer dish. Mäuntang: hot fish soup with plenty of vegetables. Kungjungchongol: often called the royal dish, this is a rich variety of shellfish, fish, meat and vegetables cooked in a soup broth. Mandukuk: soup with meatballs wrapped in dough. Hanjongshik: This is the home cooking you would order while staying at a Korean inn. It is eaten in your room and consists of vegetables, eggs, fish and numerous kimchi dishes with rice and soup. Unlike Japan - where one is expected to indicate satisfaction with food by slurping and other sounds often offensive to Westerners - Koreans are quiet eaters. Even excess conversation is considered impolite during a meal. George Ridge has written a Sunday travel column for the "Arizona Daily Star" in Tucson, Ariz., for 14 years. He is a professor emeritus at the University of Arizona. Be sure to also read: "Seoul Food - Dining In Korea".