



ANCIENT · CROSS-CULTURAL · MODERNIST REVIVAL · PANTRY · CONDIMENT  
· FLAVOR BASE

# Ajos en Miel Fermentados · 3-Month Honey-Fermented Garlic

Whole peeled garlic cloves submerged in raw honey, sealed in a mason jar, fermented at room temperature for 3 months minimum — the honey transforms into dark amber, slightly-acidic syrup; the garlic loses its raw pungency + develops a sweet-savory mellow character. A 5,000-year-old preservation technique revived by modern home fermenters. 2 minutes active + 3 months patience. The garlic cloves + the honey are both used: garlic is a condiment or ingredient, honey is a modernist sauce base or finishing drizzle. Produces one 500-ml jar; lasts 2+ years.

Protein None (garlic + honey)

Serves 1 × 500 ml jar · 30-40 cloves + ~400 ml transformed honey

Difficulty Beginner

Active 5 min

Total 3 months minimum

## THE STORY

### Honey + Garlic + Time = Alchemy

Honey has low water activity + high sugar concentration — properties that make it naturally shelf-stable for decades (Egyptian tombs contained edible 3,000-year-old honey). Garlic naturally contains water + bioactive enzymes. When fresh garlic is submerged in raw honey, two interesting things happen: (1) honey's osmotic pressure draws water OUT of the garlic, dilutes the honey slightly, + lowers the honey's water-

activity further. (2) Wild yeasts present on the garlic begin a slow alcoholic fermentation, converting some of the honey's glucose into tiny amounts of alcohol + CO<sub>2</sub>. Over 3 months at room temperature: the garlic mellows (loses its raw sulfur-pungency), the honey thins + darkens, + a stable symbiosis emerges. A traditional technique going back to Chinese + European folk medicine.

The result is two ingredients in one jar: (1) Fermented garlic cloves — sweet, faintly boozy, savory, no longer sharp. Use in place of raw or cooked garlic in sauces or stews; melts into marinades; excellent chopped finely on cheese boards or as garnish. (2) Garlic-fermented honey — dark amber, slightly thinner than raw honey, with a garlic-musky-sweet profile that works beautifully as a glaze (brush onto roasted meats), as a cocktail sweetener (in bourbon-based drinks), or drizzled over cheese + nuts + bread.

The process is radically simple: peel garlic cloves; fill jar half-full; top with raw honey covering everything; seal loosely (not airtight). Open daily for first 2 weeks to release CO<sub>2</sub> (fermentation is active); after 2 weeks, CO<sub>2</sub> production slows. After 3 months: ready to use. Some practitioners take it to 6-12 months; flavor intensifies further. This is the easiest fermentation in the Umami library + one of the most rewarding long-term projects.

# Specs

<p><b>YIELD</b></p> <p><b>1 × 500 ml jar: 30-40 peeled garlic cloves + ~400 ml transformed honey</b></p>	<p><b>FERMENT TIME</b></p> <p><b>3 months minimum (basic); 6 months peak; 1 2+ months advanced</b></p>	<p><b>TEMPERATURE</b></p> <p><b>Room temperature (20-24°C); stable throughout</b></p>	<p><b>GARLIC</b></p> <p><b>Fresh garlic (1 head per 5 cloves) — grocery or farmer's market; peeled</b></p>
<p><b>HONEY</b></p> <p><b>Raw unpasteurized honey (not heated) — wildflower, clover, or orange blossom ideal</b></p>	<p><b>KEEP</b></p> <p><b>Room temp indefinitely; 2-5 years as the flavor develops. Refrigerate after 6 months for stability.</b></p>	<p><b>DIFFICULTY</b></p> <p><b>Beginner</b></p> <p>●○○○○</p>	<p><b>ACTIVE TIME</b></p> <p><b>5 min setup + 10 sec daily burp (2 weeks)</b></p>
<p><b>KEY RULE</b></p> <p><b>Raw unpasteurized honey only. Pasteurized/heated honey has killed yeasts that drive fermentation.</b></p>			

# What Changed & Why

Two variables: honey + garlic. Technique is identical. ● Tier A (Everyday) uses **raw wildflower or clover honey** (Whole Foods, local health food stores — any jar labeled 'raw unpasteurized') + **fresh grocery garlic**. Produces excellent honey-fermented garlic. ● Tier B (No Limits) uses **single-origin raw honey from a Miami bee-keeper or farmer's market** (Blackbird Honey Company, Sweet Bee Honey) + **Las Pedroñeras DOP purple garlic** from Spanish specialty importers. Specific honey sources have distinctive flavor profiles (orange blossom is sweetest-bright; wildflower is deeply complex; sourwood is classical). Miami has active local beekeepers; farmer's markets have the freshest raw honey.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	Use pasteurized grocery honey	Use RAW unpasteurized honey only	Pasteurized honey has been heated to 60°C+, killing the wild yeasts + enzymes that drive fermentation. Fermentation won't happen with pasteurized honey. Raw honey is essential. Look for 'raw' on the label; 'unfiltered' is also typically raw.
TECH	Open jar only at end of ferment	Open + burp the jar daily for first 2 weeks to release CO2	Fermentation produces CO2. Without releasing it, pressure builds + the jar can leak or burst. Opening daily for 10 seconds during the first 2 weeks (while fermentation is active) keeps things safe. After 2 weeks, fermentation slows + burping daily becomes unnecessary.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
ADD	—	Stir or invert the jar every 2-3 days during the first month to ensure all garlic is in contact with honey	Garlic can float + collect in the top of the jar. Stirring/inverting ensures all cloves are submerged + fermenting. After the first month, the garlic has sunk + settles naturally.
ADD	—	Optional: add a few peppercorns + a small thyme sprig during the ferment for aromatic complexity	Aromatic additions are traditional in some European versions + provide additional flavor layers. Completely optional; plain honey + garlic is the canonical version. If adding: 5-10 peppercorns + 1 sprig thyme per jar.
ELEV	Grocery honey	Single-origin raw honey from a Miami local beekeeper	Single-origin honeys (orange blossom, mangrove, palmetto, Brazilian pepper — all Miami varieties) have distinctive flavor profiles. The fermented honey inherits the honey's original character + adds the garlic-transformation. Sourcing locally supports beekeepers + guarantees freshness.
SKIP	Heat or add acid to 'speed up' fermentation	Never heat the honey or add acid. Patience is the technique.	The slow 3-month ferment IS the method. Heating honey kills yeasts + stops fermentation. Adding acid alters the chemistry + produces a different product. Simple honey + garlic + 3+ months at room temp = the only path.

## INGREDIENTS

# What You Need

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### Everyday

#### The Ingredients

- 1 × 500 ml glass jar with lid
- 30-40 **fresh garlic cloves**, peeled (4-5 heads grocery garlic)
- 400-500 ml **raw unpasteurized honey** — wildflower or clover (Whole Foods, health food stores)

### No Limits

#### The Ingredients (Tier B)

- 1 × 500 ml glass jar
- 30-40 cloves **Las Pedroñeras DOP purple garlic** (Spanish specialty import)
- 400-500 ml **single-origin raw honey from Miami beekeeper** — orange blossom or mangrove from Blackbird Honey, Sweet Bee Honey, or Verde Miami farmer's market

## EQUIPMENT

# Your Kit

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- 500 ml glass jar with non-airtight lid (loose-fitting metal lid or cheesecloth-and-rubber-band)
- Kitchen scale (optional; cloves can be counted)
- Small knife for peeling garlic

MISE EN PLACE

## Before You Start

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- Garlic cloves peeled + ready

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- Honey at room temperature (cold honey is thick + hard to pour)

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- Clean sterilized jar

MAKE-AHEAD

## Timeline

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## METHOD

# The Cook

### 1 Phase 1 · Setup — 5 minutes

1. Sterilize the 500 ml jar (boil 5 minutes, or run through dishwasher's hot cycle).
2. Peel 30-40 garlic cloves.
3. Fill the jar with peeled garlic cloves (should fill about half the jar).
4. Pour raw honey over the garlic, filling the jar to within 1 cm of the top. All garlic should be covered with honey; if not, add more honey.
5. Place the lid on the jar loosely (NOT airtight — fermentation produces gas that needs to escape).
6. Alternative: cover with cheesecloth + a rubber band for a guaranteed non-airtight seal.

#### WHY THIS WORKS

Simple setup. Raw honey's low water activity + garlic's natural yeasts set up the slow fermentation. Loose seal allows CO<sub>2</sub> escape while preventing contaminants.

### 2 Phase 2 · Active Fermentation — Weeks 1-4

1. Days 1-14: Each day, briefly open the jar (10 seconds) to release built-up CO<sub>2</sub>. Then stir or gently invert the jar to ensure garlic contact with honey. Reseal loosely.
2. By day 4-7: You should see small bubbles forming + rising through the honey. This is active fermentation — yeasts converting honey glucose to alcohol + CO<sub>2</sub>.
3. Day 7-14: Bubbles continue; garlic may rise + float. Continue daily burping + stirring.
4. Week 3-4: Bubbling slows dramatically. Fermentation is winding down. Stirring becomes less critical.

#### WHY THIS WORKS

Active fermentation occurs over 2-3 weeks at room temp. Honey's water content + garlic's natural yeasts drive the conversion. CO<sub>2</sub> release is normal + expected.

### 3 Phase 3 · Slow Development — Months 1-3

1. Weeks 4-12: Little visible activity. The ferment is quietly developing.
2. Each 2 weeks: Check the jar; stir once; reseal.
3. Over these months: the honey will darken from golden to amber to deep amber; it will thin slightly; the garlic will go from white to ivory to slightly amber at edges; the smell will shift from sharp raw-garlic to complex sweet-savory.
4. At 3 months: ready to use. Open the jar, verify flavor. Taste a clove + a drop of honey. Should taste: sweet + savory + slightly boozy + mellow — NOT sharp raw-garlic.
5. After 6 months: peak flavor. Refrigerate to stabilize for long-term storage.



#### WHY THIS WORKS

During the slow development phase, chemical changes continue: honey darkens (Maillard-type reactions at slow room-temp speed), garlic loses pungency (sulfur compounds transform into sweet-milder variants), alcohol + CO<sub>2</sub> from earlier fermentation integrates into the liquid.

### 4 Phase 4 · Use + Applications

1. Both components are usable: garlic cloves + honey.
2. Garlic cloves: chop finely + stir into marinades, sauces, stews. Melts into meats during cooking. Use anywhere you'd use raw or cooked garlic. ~2-3 cloves per dish as you'd use regular garlic (but sweeter + more complex).
3. Garlic honey: drizzle over cheese + nuts + bread. Use as glaze on roasted meats (brush on chicken or pork before the final sear). In cocktails: 1/2 oz garlic honey + 2 oz bourbon + 1/4 oz lemon = complex boozy variation. In dressings: tablespoon of garlic honey in vinaigrette.
4. Each 500-ml jar should last 6-12 months of regular use. Refrigerate after 6 months for stability.



#### WHY THIS WORKS

The finished product is a stable, low-water-activity, fermented condiment. Indefinitely shelf-stable at room temp; refrigerated for maximum stability.





QUICK REFERENCE

# Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Setup	T- 0	Peel, fill, honey, seal loose
Daily burp + stir	Weeks 1 - 2	10 sec each day
Weekly check	Weeks 3 - 4	Stir + verify
Slow development	Months 1 - 3	Check every 2 weeks
Ready	Month 3	Taste cloves; use

TROUBLESHOOTING

# Emergency Protocols

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# Technique Notes

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## ● **Universal: Honey-Fermented Garlic as Ancient Tradition**

HISTORICAL FERMENTATION · CROSS-CULTURAL

Honey-ferment garlic appears in Chinese traditional medicine, European folk traditions, + modernist revival. Uses: ingredient, medicinal application (immune support, cough remedy — folk belief), flavor enhancer. The simplicity + long shelf life made it universal across cultures. Reference: Historical Fermentation; Cultural Context §Traditional Preservation.

## ● **Universal: Honey's Low Water Activity**

FOOD CHEMISTRY · PRESERVATION

Honey has water activity  $\sim 0.6$  — extremely low, inhospitable to most bacteria. This makes honey naturally shelf-stable for decades + an ideal preservation medium for garlic (which has water activity  $\sim 0.95$ ). The osmotic transfer + wild-yeast fermentation happen slowly at honey's water-activity. Reference: Food Chemistry §Water Activity; Preservation §Honey Methods.

## ● **Universal: Slow-Fermentation-as-Alchemy**

FERMENTATION PHILOSOPHY

Not all fermentation is fast. Some traditional ferments take 3-12+ months. Examples: honey-ferment garlic (this), soy sauce (2-3 years), fish sauce (1+ year), aged miso (6 months - 5 years), some cheeses (2-5 years). The long timeline isn't a bug; it's the feature. Flavors develop + integrate over time that no accelerated process can produce. Reference: Fermentation Philosophy §Slow Methods; Cross-Culture §Long Ferments.

## ● **Universal: Dual-Ingredient Fermentation**

FERMENTATION DESIGN · CROSS-RECIPE

In honey-ferment garlic, both components transform + both are valuable: the garlic (eat-it) + the honey (use-it). Similarly: kimchi produces brine used separately from vegetables; miso production produces koji-rice + paste + soy-sauce byproducts; cheese production produces cheese + whey. Many ferments are multi-product. Reference: Fermentation Design §Dual Products.

## ● **Universal: The Minimum-Effort Fermentation**

HOME KITCHEN PHILOSOPHY

Some fermentations are high-effort (garum: 60°C hold for 10 weeks, precise ratios). Others are low-effort (this: peel garlic, submerge in honey, wait). Home fermentation becomes accessible when the easy ones are attempted first. Honey-ferment garlic is the easiest fermentation in the library + a perfect entry point. Reference: Home Kitchen Philosophy §Accessibility; Fermentation §Effort Scaling.

## ● **No Limits: Single-Origin Raw Honey**

INGREDIENT QUALITY · HONEY SOURCE

Generic grocery raw honey is fine (anything labeled 'raw'). Single-origin honey from known beekeepers has distinctive character: orange blossom (Florida) = citrus-floral; wildflower = complex + seasonal; sourwood = caramel-vanilla; palmetto = slight grassiness. Each transforms the fermented product differently. Miami sources: Blackbird Honey Company, Sweet Bee Honey, Verde Miami farmer's market. Reference: Ingredient Encyclopedia §Honey; Sourcing §Miami Beekeepers.

## No Limits: Las Pedroñeras DOP Purple Garlic

INGREDIENT QUALITY · GARLIC SOURCE

Cross-reference: lechazo-castellano + other Spanish recipes. Las Pedroñeras purple garlic (Ajo Morado de Las Pedroñeras DOP) is a specific Spanish variety with more-pungent flavor + purple outer skin. For honey-fermentation, the purple garlic produces a slightly more-complex final product. Sourcing: Spanish specialty imports (La Tienda, Despaña). For daily cooking, any good fresh garlic works. Reference: Ingredient Encyclopedia §Spanish Garlic; Sourcing §Spanish Pantry.

### PAIRING

## What to Drink

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### Application — Cheese Board

Drizzle the garlic honey over aged cheddar, Manchego, or goat cheese + nuts + crackers

*The garlic-honey's complex sweet-savory notes pair beautifully with aged hard cheeses + creamy goat cheese. A restaurant-grade cheese board in 5 minutes.*

### Application — Meat Glaze

Brush the garlic honey onto chicken thighs or pork shoulder in the last 10 minutes of roasting

*The honey caramelizes on the meat's surface, adding sticky-sweet-savory glaze. Works especially well with chicken, pork, duck.*

### Application — Soup + Stew Enhancer

Finely chop 2-3 fermented garlic cloves + stir into any savory soup or stew

*The mellowed garlic adds complexity without the sharpness of raw garlic. Works in: Spanish stews (callos, fabada), French soups (onion), Italian minestrone, pumpkin soups.*

### **Application — Cocktail Sweetener**

1/2 oz garlic honey + 2 oz bourbon + 1/4 oz lemon = garlic-honey bourbon sour. Also works in gin cocktails.

*Experimental but genuinely works. The garlic-honey's savory complexity elevates classic cocktails. Try it as variation on a traditional sour.*

### **Application — Vinaigrette Base**

1 tbsp garlic honey + 2 tbsp olive oil + 1 tbsp sherry vinegar + salt = a bold vinaigrette

*The fermented complexity produces a dressing that works on roasted vegetables + bold salads.*

### **Application — Bread Topper**

Drizzle garlic honey + a crumb of blue cheese on toasted country bread

*A canonical simple appetizer. 30 seconds of assembly; dinner-party-worthy.*

## CONTEXT

# Menu Ideas

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### **Long-Term Pantry Staple**

Make a jar every 3-6 months. Rotate through: one jar in cabinet (aging), one jar in use. Regular application across dozens of dishes.

### **Fermentation Education**

Honey-ferment garlic is the ideal first fermentation for anyone new to the practice. Low effort + high reward + no special equipment. Start here before attempting garum, miso, kimchi, or other more-complex ferments.

## Gift-Giving

Small 250-ml jars make exceptional gifts. Handwritten label + a cheese-board pairing note + a ribbon = a thoughtful edible gift.

### YOUR NOTES

## Cook Log

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### Session Notes

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ · Serves: \_\_\_\_ · Rating: \_\_ / 5

*Use this space to record what you changed, what worked, and what you'd do differently next time. Your future self will thank you.*



Stop following recipes. Start understanding food.

