



KOREAN · LACTO-FERMENT · CONDIMENT · PANTRY FERMENT

Kimchi

The gateway ferment. Napa cabbage, gochugaru, fish sauce, garlic, ginger — salted, packed, and left alone for three days in Miami's heat. Salty, sour, spicy, umami, crunchy. Your first real lacto-ferment, and the condiment that makes grilled meats make sense.

Protein None (fermented vegetable)

Serves ~1.5 L finished kimchi (keeps 6+ months refrigerated)

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 45 min (2 sessions: salt wilt + paste build)

Total 3-7 days total (2-4 h initial wilt + 2-4 days room-temp ferment)

THE STORY

Your First Lacto-Ferment

You have a sourdough starter. That means you already understand what fermentation is: microbes, time, controlled environment, transformation. Kimchi is the next step — not harder, just different microbes. Sourdough uses wild yeast. Kimchi uses *Lactobacillus*, the bacteria living on every raw vegetable you've ever touched. Give them salt, give them an anaerobic environment, give them time, and they convert the cabbage's sugars into lactic acid. Tangy. Alive. A little fizzy on the tongue.

Miami's heat is both gift and constraint. What takes a week in a Brooklyn winter kitchen takes three days here. The *Lactobacillus* love 25–32 °C — your ambient conditions. The risk is speed: from "perfect" to "too sour" is sometimes twelve hours, not a weekend. The move is to check at day 1, day 2, day 3, and when it tastes the way you want it to taste, move it to the fridge to slow the bacteria to a crawl.

Young kimchi (3–5 days in) is crisp, bright, slightly fizzy, the red–orange of a good pimentón. Aged kimchi (weeks, months) is softer, funkier, more complex — the stew and fried–rice version. Both are valid. Both belong in the fridge in separate jars. And there's a move, mentioned almost in passing in the fermentation chapter but worth shouting: aged kimchi, finely chopped, mixed into Spanish sofrito, is a Korean–Spanish fusion bridge that tastes like it shouldn't exist and works anyway.

AT A GLANCE

Specs

<p>YIELD</p> <p>~1.5 L finished (1 × large jar)</p>	<p>BASE</p> <p>Napa cabbage + gochugaru paste</p>	<p>ROOM TEMP</p> <p>25–32 °C (Miami ambient)</p>	<p>DIFFICULTY</p> <p>Intermediate</p> <p>●●○○○</p>
<p>ACTIVE TIME</p> <p>45 min across 2 sessions</p>	<p>FERMENT TIME</p> <p>2–4 days room temp, then fridge</p>	<p>MAKE-AHEAD</p> <p>Essential — it IS the make-ahead</p>	<p>STORAGE</p> <p>6+ months refrigerated</p>
<p>PAIRS WITH</p> <p>Kamado pork, grilled proteins, rice</p>	<p>MIAMI NOTE</p> <p>Faster than most guides assume</p>		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

What Changed & Why

Classical Korean kimchi recipes calibrate for cooler kitchens (15–22 °C) and assume 5–14 days of room–temp ferment. Miami requires recalibration: 25–32 °C ambient cuts the ferment to 2–4 days, and salt ratio bumps to 3% (from the traditional 2%) to control the microbial pace. The adaptation keeps the core Korean technique — salt wilt, paste build, anaerobic packing — and

adds the Pablo-specific: a Spanish fusion layer (aged kimchi + sofrito, see ● card), a fridge-pace control protocol, and the Miami-climate timing adjustments that fermentation newcomers need.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	2% salt, 7+ day ferment	3% salt, 2–4 day Miami ferment + fridge transfer	Miami heat accelerates <i>Lactobacillus</i> ; higher salt + earlier fridge prevents over-fermentation
ADD	—	Rice flour paste (glutinous rice starter)	Traditional Korean move — the starch feeds <i>Lactobacillus</i> early, accelerating controlled fermentation
ADD	—	● Aged kimchi + sofrito fusion (2+ months aged kimchi)	Spanish-Korean bridge — aged kimchi finely chopped into sofrito = depth no other base can match
TECH	Taste-test once daily	Taste at 24 h / 48 h / 72 h; fridge immediately when right	Narrow Miami window — 12 h delay can push past peak
SUB	Fish sauce (traditional)	Fish sauce + salted shrimp (saeujeot) — ● variant	Deeper umami; saeujeot is the Korean equivalent of Spanish garum — a briny glutamate source

What You Need

● Everyday

The Cabbage

- 1 large napa cabbage (~1 kg) — any Asian grocer, or the Asian aisle of Whole Foods / Publix Key Biscayne
- 60 g kosher salt (for initial 2–4 h wilt — do not use iodized table salt; iodine inhibits *Lactobacillus*)
- Filtered water for rinsing (Miami tap water is chlorinated — the chlorine can weaken the ferment)

The Paste

- 60 g **gochugaru** (Korean red pepper flakes — NOT Mexican chile flakes; the grain size and flavor are specific). Asian grocer or Amazon. Mother Jones brand or similar Korean-authentic.
- 30 g fish sauce (Red Boat, 3 Crabs, or other quality brand — not a watery cheap fish sauce)
- 15 g sugar
- 30 g garlic, minced to a paste
- 15 g ginger, finely grated
- **Rice flour paste:** 30 g glutinous rice flour + 120 ml water, heated in small saucepan while stirring until thickened (2–3 min), cooled completely

Mix-ins

- 4 scallions, cut into 5 cm pieces
- Optional: 200 g Korean radish (mu) or daikon, cut into matchsticks

Substitution Notes

- *No napa cabbage?* Green cabbage can work but produces a completely different texture (crunchier, more assertive). Lost with pointed head cabbage — too dense. If napa isn't available, wait until it is.
- *No gochugaru?* **Don't substitute.** Mexican chile flakes + paprika is NOT gochugaru. The flavor profile is fundamentally different. Gochugaru is cheap online and stores forever. Buy it.
- *Vegetarian version?* Replace fish sauce with 30 ml soy sauce + 5 g miso paste + 1 tsp dulce flakes. Different, still good.

No Limits

The Cabbage — Organic + Regional

- 1 large organic napa cabbage — Whole Foods or Homestead farmer's market (Miami summer availability)
- 60 g **Korean sea salt (cheonilyeom)** — coarse, gray, mineral. Adds trace minerals that support Lactobacillus. Available at H Mart or online.
- Filtered water — reverse-osmosis if possible; Miami tap chlorine inhibits fermentation

The Paste — Deeper Umami

- 60 g **gochugaru premium grade** — taeyangcho (sun-dried) or Yeongyang origin, brighter red, more complex than commodity
- 30 g high-quality fish sauce — Red Boat 40°N (higher-protein, deeper flavor)
- **15 g saeujeot (Korean salted baby shrimp)** — the secret umami amplifier; H Mart or Korean grocer
- 15 g organic sugar or palm sugar
- 30 g Korean purple garlic if available, else 30 g standard garlic minced to paste
- 15 g fresh ginger, grated
- Rice flour paste (same method — glutinous rice flour only, not regular)

Mix-ins — Classical Korean

- 4 scallions, 5 cm pieces
- 200 g Korean mu radish, matchsticks (Asian grocer — daikon is the workable substitute)
- 100 g Asian pear, matchsticks (the classical Korean sweetness — available in Miami Asian markets in summer)
- 1 tbsp toasted sesame seeds (optional, for garnish when serving)

Infrastructure

- Wide-mouth 2 L glass jar (Ball or Weck) — preferred over crocks for Miami's climate
- Glass fermentation weight (Masontops or similar) — essential for keeping cabbage submerged
- Silicone airlock lid insert (allows CO₂ escape, no air in)
- pH strips (optional, for safety verification at maturity — target pH ≤ 4.5 for safe storage)
- Non-reactive mixing bowl (large — cabbage expands dramatically during salting)

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- Large non-reactive bowl (5 L+) for salt wilt

- Wide-mouth 2 L glass jar (Mason Ball, Weck, or similar)

- Fermentation weight (glass, fits inside jar)

- Airlock lid insert OR a sandwich bag filled with brine as a makeshift weight + loose-fitted lid

- Sharp chef's knife (for cabbage cutting)

- Kitchen gloves (NON-NEGOTIABLE — gochugaru will burn your skin for hours)

- Saucepan (for rice flour paste)

- Kitchen scale (salt ratios are by weight, always)

- pH strips (optional, for verification)

- Paper towel + rubber band (alternative to airlock — covers jar, lets gas escape)

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- Napa cabbage trimmed, cut lengthwise into quarters, then cross-cut into 5 cm pieces (not shredded — preserve texture)

 - Rice flour paste made + cooled (do this FIRST — must be room temp by the time you mix the paste)

 - All paste ingredients measured and ready (gochugaru, fish sauce, sugar, garlic paste, ginger, rice flour paste)

 - Scallions cut to 5 cm pieces

 - Radish matchsticks cut (if using)

 - Large bowl + kitchen gloves at the workspace
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Clean 2 L jar + fermentation weight + airlock lid ready

Timer set: day-1 check at 24 h, day-2 at 48 h, day-3 at 72 h

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

T-0 – Cabbage + Salt

Toss cut cabbage with 60 g kosher salt in large bowl. Massage lightly to distribute. Leave on counter 2–4 h until cabbage is wilted and flexible.

T+3 h – Rinse + Drain

Rinse cabbage THREE TIMES in filtered water to remove excess salt. Squeeze gently to drain. Cabbage should be wilted and translucent.

T+3:15 – Make Paste

Combine gochugaru, fish sauce, sugar, garlic, ginger, cooled rice flour paste in bowl. Mix to a thick red paste.

T+3:20 – Combine

Wearing gloves: toss cabbage + scallions + radish with paste. Massage until everything is coated red. Cabbage should darken visibly.

T+3:35 – Pack

Press tightly into 2 L jar. Eliminate air pockets. Cabbage should submerge under its own liquid (press firmly). Add fermentation weight. Lid on (airlock or loose).

T+3:40 – First Day Ferment

Leave on counter (out of direct sun). Room temp 25–32 °C in Miami.

T+24 h – Day 1 Check

Taste one piece. Should be faintly sour, still crisp, slightly fizzy on tongue. If yes: continue. If not sour yet: wait 12 h more.

T+48 h – Day 2 Check

Taste again. Most Miami kitchens: this is ready. Sour, bubbly, assertive. If not: wait 24 h more.

● **T+72 h – Day 3 Check**

If Day 2 wasn't ready, Day 3 almost always is. Beyond Day 4 in Miami: risk of over-fermentation (mushy texture).

● **Ready – Fridge**

Transfer jar to fridge. Lactobacillus slows to a crawl at 3–5 °C. Kimchi continues developing slowly over weeks/months.

METHOD

The Cook

1 Salt Wilt (3–4 h, hands-off)

1. Cut napa cabbage: remove root end, quarter lengthwise, then cross-cut into 5 cm pieces (leaves + ribs kept attached; don't shred).
2. In a large non-reactive bowl, toss cabbage with 60 g kosher salt. Massage with hands (ungloved OK at this stage — no chile yet).
3. Leave on counter, uncovered, for 2–4 hours at room temperature. The cabbage will visibly release water, wilt to about 50% of its original volume, and become flexible (you can bend a rib without it snapping).
4. After wilting: rinse the cabbage in a colander with filtered water **THREE TIMES** — this removes excess salt while keeping the structural cell damage that salt created.
5. Squeeze handfuls of cabbage gently to drain. Cabbage should feel damp, not wet. Set aside in a clean bowl.

WHY THIS WORKS

Salt pulls water out of cabbage cells via osmosis. This does two things: (1) breaks the cell walls just enough to let the paste's flavors penetrate deeply during fermentation, (2) removes ~30% of the cabbage's initial water weight, which concentrates the remaining sugars and mineral content — meaning *Lactobacillus* has a richer feedstock than raw cabbage would provide. The 3-rinse step removes most of the salt (final product is ~1.5–2% salt by weight, which is fermentation-safe but palatable). Reference: fermentation.md §3 (Lacto-Fermentation Basics); Produce & Vegetables §6 (Brassicas — Sulfur Chemistry).


2 Rice Flour Paste (10 min, must cool completely)

1. In a small saucepan, whisk 30 g glutinous rice flour with 120 ml water.
2. Heat over medium heat, whisking constantly, until the mixture thickens to a loose paste consistency (2–3 minutes). It should be glossy, slightly translucent, and coat the back of a spoon.
3. Remove from heat. Transfer to a bowl. **Cool completely to room temperature** — hot rice paste added to the gochugaru will denature enzymes and kill some Lactobacillus on the cabbage surface. Patience here.
4. Make this step FIRST when starting kimchi — it needs 15–20 min to cool while the cabbage is salting.

WHY THIS WORKS

The rice flour paste is a traditional Korean technique. It provides soluble starch that Lactobacillus can ferment directly, giving them a head start before they break down the cabbage's complex sugars. This accelerates the controlled fermentation and produces a smoother, more integrated sour flavor. Skipping the paste makes kimchi that ferments slightly slower and has a thinner body. Also: glutinous rice flour (mochiko/chapssalgaru), not regular rice flour — the higher amylopectin content is what creates the coating viscosity.

3 Paste Build + Toss (15 min)

1. In a large bowl, combine: 60 g gochugaru + 30 g fish sauce + 15 g sugar + 30 g garlic paste + 15 g grated ginger + the **cooled rice flour paste**.
2. Mix with a spoon or spatula until it forms a thick, glossy, red paste. It should be the color of dark brick. The smell is assertive — garlic, chile, funk — and that's correct.
3.  (No Limits): Add 15 g saeujeot (salted shrimp) and mash into the paste. The tiny shrimp disintegrate and add an ocean-deep umami layer.
4. **Put on kitchen gloves NOW.** Gochugaru binds to skin oils and produces a slow burn that lasts hours. Ungloved hands after handling the paste will transfer chile to your eyes, face, and any mucous membrane you touch for the next 6 hours. Non-negotiable.
5. In a larger bowl, combine the drained cabbage + scallions + radish matchsticks (if using).
6. Add the paste. Toss and **massage** until every piece of cabbage is coated red-orange. The cabbage will darken visibly as the paste penetrates. Keep massaging for 5 minutes — this is the flavor-penetration step.

WHY THIS WORKS

Gochugaru's capsaicin is fat-soluble; the fish sauce's lipids + the rice paste starch create a paste matrix that carries capsaicin + glutamates into cabbage cell structure. The massage phase (5 min) mechanically drives the paste through the salt-weakened cell walls, creating a depth of flavor that a quick toss cannot achieve. The ratio of solids:paste (1 kg cabbage : ~150 g paste) is calibrated so every bite is coated but no piece is drowning. Reference: Sauces & Condiments §11 (Fermented Condiments).

4 Pack + Weight + Ferment (2–4 days)

1. Transfer coated cabbage into clean wide-mouth 2 L glass jar, pressing firmly with a fist or pestle to eliminate air pockets.
2. **Critical:** as you pack, brine should rise to cover the solids. Keep pressing. The cabbage should be fully submerged in its own released liquid.
3. Leave 2–3 cm headspace at the top of the jar — the kimchi will expand and push brine up during fermentation.
4. Place fermentation weight on top (glass weight or a smaller jar filled with brine). This keeps any stray cabbage below the liquid line — exposed pieces grow mold.
5. Cover with airlock lid, OR a loose-fitted mason jar lid (don't screw tight — CO₂ must escape), OR a paper towel secured with a rubber band.
6. Leave on counter out of direct sunlight. Miami kitchen ambient (25–32 °C) will produce:
 7. • Day 1 (24 h): Faint bubbles visible on sides of jar, mild souring begins
 8. • Day 2 (48 h): Active bubbling, brine turns cloudy, distinct sour aroma
 9. • Day 3 (72 h): Peak activity in Miami — taste test mandatory
 10. • Day 4+: Risk zone — texture starts softening, flavor goes past "sour" to "over-sour"

WHY THIS WORKS

The anaerobic environment (submerged, airlocked) favors *Lactobacillus* over aerobic spoilage microbes. *Lactobacillus* converts glucose and fructose (from cabbage + rice paste) into lactic acid, CO₂, and trace flavor compounds (diacetyl, acetoin). As lactic acid accumulates, pH drops from ~6.0 (starting) to ~3.5–4.0 (finished). Below pH 4.5, the environment is hostile to virtually all pathogens — kimchi is self-preserving once it hits this pH. Miami's 25–32 °C ambient accelerates *Lactobacillus* reproduction about 3× compared to 15–20 °C — hence the 2–4 day timeline vs the classical 7–14. Reference: fermentation.md §3 (*Lactobacillus* Biology); Nutrition & Health §6 (Fermented Foods).

5 Taste-Test Protocol + Fridge Transfer

1. At 24, 48, and 72 h: open the jar briefly, use a clean fork (never fingers — contaminates the ferment), and taste one piece of cabbage and one sip of brine.
2. Look for: (1) pronounced tang — your tongue should register acidity, not just saltiness. (2) Slight fizz on the tongue — CO₂ activity. (3) Still-crisp texture — cabbage should crunch, not flex. (4) Aroma is funky-fresh — garlic, chile, slight sulfur, NO cheesy or rotten notes.
3. When all four hit: **immediately transfer the jar to the refrigerator**. This slows Lactobacillus from active multiplication to dormant maintenance. The kimchi continues to develop SLOWLY over the next weeks/months.
4. If Day 3 taste shows no tang: not ready, close jar, wait 12 h more.
5. If Day 3 taste shows mush or off-smells: fermentation went wrong (contamination, temperature too high, salt too low). Discard and restart — don't try to save a failed ferment.

WHY THIS WORKS

Lactobacillus activity has a Q₁₀ of ~2.5 — meaning every 10 °C drop roughly halves the fermentation rate. Miami counter (~28 °C) → fridge (~4 °C) = ~24 °C drop = ~6× slower ferment. Not stopped — the flavor still evolves over months — but controllable. Fresh (3–7 days in) = crisp, bright. 1 month aged = softer, funkier. 3+ months aged = deep, complex, the "stew kimchi" used for kimchi jjigae.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Cabbage cut + salt toss	10 min	5 cm pieces, coated in salt, in large bowl
Salt wilt (passive)	2–4 h	Cabbage wilted to 50% volume, ribs flexible
Rice flour paste (make + cool)	15 min active + 20 min cool	Glossy, translucent, room temp
Rinse + drain cabbage	5 min	3 rinses, damp not wet
Paste assembly	5 min	Thick red paste, brick-colored

STEP	TIME	CUE
Glove up + massage	10 min	Every piece coated, cabbage darkens red
Pack jar + weight	5 min	Brine rises to cover, 2–3 cm headspace
Day 1 check	24 h from pack	Mild bubbles, faint sour — not ready yet in Miami
Day 2 check	48 h	Active fizz, cloudy brine, sour aroma — usually ready
Day 3 check	72 h	Peak in Miami — tang strong, texture crisp — FRIDGE NOW
Transfer to fridge	1 min	Slows ferment, flavor develops over weeks

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

WHITE FUZZ / MOLD ON TOP OF KIMCHI

Discard. This is aerobic mold (kahm yeast) caused by cabbage floating above the brine. Next time: fermentation weight + tighter packing. For current batch: the mold penetrates below the visible surface — don't try to scoop it off and save the rest. Restart.


KIMCHI SMELLS BAD (CHEESY, ROTTEN, AMMONIA)

Contamination. Salt was too low, temperature too high, or jar wasn't clean. Discard. These smells indicate pathogenic or spoilage bacteria, NOT Lactobacillus (which smells sour-garlicky-funky but not rotten).

NO BUBBLES AT 48 H — NOTHING IS HAPPENING

Salt was too high (inhibits Lactobacillus) OR cabbage had been pre-washed with antibacterial/bleach. Check salt ratio — should be ~2% of post-rinse cabbage weight. If salt is right and it's stalled: 72 h is the upper limit; if still nothing, discard.

KIMCHI IS TOO SOUR / PAST PEAK

Fermented too long at room temp. Not ruined — aged kimchi has uses. (1) Add it to kimchi jjigae (stew) — the acid dissolves and the funk becomes flavor. (2) Finely chop into sofrito for the  Korean–Spanish fusion. (3) Kimchi fried rice. (4) Dump on kamado–grilled pork belly. Never eat aged kimchi as a fresh condiment — use it as an ingredient.

BRINE OVERFLOWED THE JAR ON DAY 1

Packed too full with not enough headspace. Place the jar on a small plate or in a shallow dish to catch overflow. Don't open and re-pack — just let it overflow and clean as needed. The kimchi inside is fine.

GOCHUGARU BURN ON HANDS / FINGERS / FACE

Capsaicin is fat-soluble. Water doesn't help — actually spreads it. Wash hands with DISH SOAP (breaks down capsaicin–oil bond) then wipe with milk or yogurt. If you touched your eyes: rinse with water for 10 min + see an ophthalmologist if burning persists past 2 h. Always wear gloves going forward.

NERVOUS ABOUT THE PH / SAFETY

Test with pH strips after Day 3. Safe kimchi should read $\text{pH} \leq 4.5$. Anything above 4.5 is under-fermented and potentially unsafe. Below 4.5 (usually 3.5–4.0 at peak): safe indefinitely refrigerated. Reference: fermentation.md §2 (pH and Safety).

DEEP DIVES

Technique Notes

The 2% Salt Ratio (Universal Lacto-Ferment Law)

FERMENTATION SCIENCE · UNIVERSAL

Every lacto-ferment — kimchi, sauerkraut, pickles, fermented hot sauce — calibrates to 2–3% salt by total weight. Salt does three jobs at once: (1) pulls water out of vegetables to break cell walls, (2) inhibits aerobic spoilage bacteria, (3) tolerates *Lactobacillus* (which thrives up to ~6% salt). Too low (<1.5%): risk of pathogenic bacteria outcompeting *Lactobacillus*. Too high (>5%): *Lactobacillus* slows to nearly a stop, and the ferment tastes unpleasantly salty. Miami climate pushes toward 3% to counter the heat's acceleration. Memorize: 3% of total weight. By the gram. Always. Reference: fermentation.md §1.

● Anaerobic Submersion (The Mold Rule)

FERMENTATION SETUP • UNIVERSAL

Any vegetable above the brine line will mold. Always. The fermentation weight isn't optional — it's the tool that converts an aerobic environment (favors mold) into an anaerobic environment (favors Lactobacillus). If you don't have a proper glass weight: use a smaller jar filled with brine that fits inside the larger jar, or a freezer bag filled with 2% brine that molds to the shape of the container. The principle: nothing above the liquid, ever. When a ferment molds, it's never random — it's always a piece that drifted above. Reference: fermentation.md §2 (Anaerobic Environment).

● Taste-Test With Clean Utensils Only

FERMENTATION HYGIENE • UNIVERSAL

Once the ferment starts, the jar's microbial community is balanced and self-maintaining. Introducing outside bacteria (fingers, a dirty spoon, a cross-contaminated fork) can tip the balance and ruin the batch. Protocol: when taste-testing, use a fork dipped in boiling water or rinsed with vodka, or use a plastic fork you can discard. Never fingers. Never a utensil that's been in raw chicken that afternoon. This rule is banal but ignoring it is the #1 way home ferments fail silently — they seem fine then go bad in the fridge after a week.

● No Limits: Aged Kimchi + Sofrito (Korean-Spanish Fusion)

FUSION • CROSS-PANTRY BRIDGE • EXTENDS USES

This is the move that justifies making your own kimchi instead of buying it. After 2+ months of refrigerated aging, kimchi becomes softer, funkier, deeper — too assertive for fresh use but perfect as an ingredient. Finely chop 50 g of aged kimchi and stir it into 200 g of sofrito (UMAMI-5 #2) during the last 10 minutes of the sofrito cook. The lactic acid from the kimchi brightens the sofrito's sweetness; the gochugaru's smoky heat layers onto the pimentón's smoky heat (two fermented-pepper cultures meeting); the cabbage's fermented depth adds a savory dimension that no amount of traditional Spanish seasoning can reproduce. Use this sofrito-kimchi fusion base for arroz caldoso, short ribs braise, or as a bed under grilled pork belly. It tastes like it shouldn't exist and works anyway. Reference: fermentation.md §3 (Kimchi uses); Sauces & Condiments §4 (Sofrito).

● No Limits: Saeujeot (Salted Shrimp Umami Amp)

UMAMI • KOREAN TRADITIONAL • EXTENDS PASTE

Saeujeot is Korean salted baby shrimp — tiny, pink, packed in salt, with an intense briny-umami punch. It's the Korean equivalent of garum (the Roman / Spanish anchovy sauce) — a glutamate-dense seasoning agent that appears in most serious kimchi recipes from Korea but is missing from nearly all Western adaptations. Add 15 g saeujeot to the paste (step 3) and mash the shrimp into the gochugaru-rice base. The shrimp disintegrate during fermentation, dispersing their umami throughout. Result: kimchi that tastes deeper, more aquatic, more complex than fish-sauce-only versions. Available at H Mart (Miami — nearest is in Doral) or online. Once opened, keeps 6+ months refrigerated. Reference: *Pantry & Staples* §8 (Japanese Pantry — saeujeot's Korean parallel to katsuobushi).

● No Limits: The Miami Timing Protocol

FERMENTATION CALIBRATION • CLIMATE-SPECIFIC • REFINES FERMENT TIME

Classical kimchi recipes calibrate for 15–22 °C kitchens. Miami summer ambient (25–32 °C) means *Lactobacillus* activity is ~3× faster than classical assumptions. Protocol: taste at 24 h AND 36 h AND 48 h (not just once daily). In peak summer Miami, 48 h is often already past-peak. The first batch you make, take notes on ambient temperature (measure with a kitchen thermometer) and hours-to-peak. After 3 batches, you'll know your specific kitchen's timing signature. The payoff: every future batch peaks within a predictable ±6 h window. Reference: *fermentation.md* §1 (The Miami Factor).

PAIRING

What to Drink

Beer

Korean rice lager (Cass, Hite) or crisp pilsner

Cold rice lager cuts kimchi's acidity and heat without competing with the flavors. Rice-forward beer parallels the rice-flour paste in the kimchi itself — same grain on the plate and in the glass.

Wine — Challenging Pairing

Off-dry Riesling or Gewürztraminer

Kimchi's acid + heat destroys most dry wines. Off-dry whites with residual sugar balance the heat while their acidity matches the ferment. German Kabinett or Spätlese Riesling is the classical fix for spicy fermented foods.

Soju

Korean soju (chilled, small glasses)

Cultural pairing. Neutral, slightly sweet, refreshes the palate between bites. Traditional Korean meal accompaniment; works perfectly here.

Non-Alcoholic

Barley tea (boricha), iced

Korean tradition — cold barley tea cuts spice, hydrates, resets the palate. Caffeine-free. Serves as the universal Korean-meal accompaniment.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

As a Condiment (daily use)

Serve 50 g portions alongside grilled pork belly, kamado-seared secreto (UMAMI-6 #1), rice bowls, grilled fish. The acidity cuts fat, the heat wakes the palate. Works with nearly any grilled protein.

As an Ingredient (aged kimchi)

After 2+ months: kimchi fried rice, kimchi jjigae (Korean stew), Spanish-Korean sofrito (● card). Aged kimchi is too assertive for fresh serving but ideal for cooking where the funk adds depth.

Pablo's First Lacto-Ferment

MEMORY.md: Pablo has a sourdough starter but has NOT explored lacto-fermentation. Kimchi is the right gateway — visible activity (bubbles, color shift, aroma change) makes the science tangible. After kimchi succeeds, expand to fermented hot sauce (UMAMI-8 #2, when filed), curtido, preserved lemons, eventually miso.

The Dinner Party Move

On a tapa board with Ibérico secreto (UMAMI-6 #1) and pan con tomate: add a small dish of fresh kimchi next to the three Spanish sauces. Guests unfamiliar with Korean food are disarmed by the combination; guests familiar with Korean food are delighted by the cultural bridge. Always works.

YOUR NOTES

Cook Log

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.