

HOW TO STERILIZE JARS FOR FERMENTING

A clean sterilised jar is recommended for the success and longevity of fermented vegetables. Sterilising is a quick and easy process and should never be skipped, as it is crucial in removing any bacteria, yeasts or fungi. Jars that have not been correctly cleaned will cause the food inside to spoil very quickly.

It's important to ensure that your jars are free from any cracks or chips, as the high temperatures involved in sterilisation could cause them to shatter. Always wash in hot soapy water and rinse well.

Once your jars are washed, here are some simple ways to achieve a proper sterilisation and ensure your fermentation success.

Dishwasher

If you have a high-temperature setting on your machine or a steam dishwasher the dishwasher is a good method for sterilising your jars. Fill your dishwasher with clean, cold jars, lids and any rubber seals, select the hottest cycle and allow it to run through a full wash and dry. Once cycle is complete, remove and place onto a tray lined with paper towels and allow them to air-dry if they are not yet completely dry from the dishwasher.

Microwave

This method is great if you don't have much time on your hands. But please note that the microwave method is NOT for use with metal lids, clip tops and clasps. After you have cleaned the jars as normal, and rinsed them well. Place the wet jar in the microwave on full power for 30 - 45 seconds or until bone dry, the time needed will depend on your microwave. Please use in accordance with your microwave manufacturers directions.

Stovetop

The most traditional way of sterilising jars and the best method to use for rubber seals, as dry heat from the oven can damage them. Place jars, lids and seals in a deep saucepan, cover with cold water and slowly bring to high heat. Reduce heat to medium for 10 minutes. Using metal tongs, carefully remove the from the water and place them upside down on tray lined with paper towels. Leave to air-dry, or utilise the oven method and place in oven for 15 minutes.

If your jars do not fit into your saucepan at home, warm the glass under hot tap water. Place jars in sink and carefully sink fill with hot water, ensuring that hot water covers the inside and outside of the jar. Let it stand for five minutes, then drain water. Air-dry or finish drying in the oven.

Oven

It takes slightly longer than the other ways but it is a popular method for ensuring your jars are scrupulously clean.

Preheat the oven to 120°C. Do not be tempted to heat the oven any higher, or you may risk the glass breaking.

Place your clean, wet jars and lids separately on a baking tray in an upright position, making sure the jars are not touching each other. Close the oven door and heat for a minimum of 20 minutes to dry completely.

Using thick oven mitts, remove each jar from the oven and place on a heatproof mat or towels (cold countertops can shock the jars and break them).

It is best to boil the rubber seals, as dry heat from the oven can damage them.

Note: Do NOT add cold food to hot jars, or hot food to cold jars; otherwise, the jar may shatter which can be very dangerous.

Remember: The jars need to be sterilised because the ferments sit there for a week or more, so the environment needs to be as clean as possible.

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