Sides

Lacto-Fermented Carrots

The gateway ferment — whole carrots or spears submerged in a precise 2% salt brine with garlic and dill, left to the lactobacillus bacteria that live on every vegetable's skin. In a week, the brine goes sour and cloudy, the carrots turn from raw and sharp to something pleasantly tangy, still crunchy, and probiotic. Simple enough to be your first ferment; satisfying enough to be your hundredth.

Time 10080 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 500 g Carrots, scrubbed (unpeeled preferred)
- ☐ 10 g Non-iodized sea salt or kosher salt (2% of water weight)
- ☐ 500 g Filtered or unchlorinated water
- ☐ 15 g Garlic cloves, peeled and lightly smashed
- ☐ 20 g Fresh dill sprigs
- ☐ 3 g Black peppercorns

Let's make it.

01 Measure the filtered water by weight — precision matters here. Calculate 2% of the water weight in non-iodized salt: for 500 g water, that is 10 g salt. Combine salt and water in a jar or measuring cup and stir until completely dissolved, at least 30 seconds of vigorous stirring. The brine can be made at room temperature — no heating needed, which preserves chlorine-sensitive lactobacillus if present in the water. Never use iodized table salt, which contains iodine added precisely to inhibit microbial growth — it will slow or kill your fermentation. Taste the finished brine: it should taste pleasantly salty, like mild seawater.

02 Scrub the carrots under cold water with a brush, but do not peel — the skin and the hairs on the skin carry the wild lactobacillus that will drive the fermentation. Trim the tops and bottoms. Cut carrots into spears by halving them lengthwise, or leave slender ones whole. The goal is to fit them snugly upright in a wide-mouth mason jar, packed tightly enough that they stay below the brine. Layer the dill sprigs and peppercorns in first, then wedge in the garlic cloves between the carrot spears. Pack the carrots as tightly as possible — the compression slows floating. Pour the brine over, submerging everything fully. Leave 3 to 4 cm of headspace and press a small folded piece of carrot across the top to act as a weight.

03 Set the jar at room temperature, 18 to 22°C, out of direct sunlight, for 5 to 7 days. Cover loosely — a cloth, a lid set ajar, or a proper airlock — so CO_2 can escape but fruit flies cannot enter. Press the carrots back below the brine once a day with a clean fork or spoon; gas lifts them over time. Taste daily from day 3: the brine will progressively sour as lactic acid builds, and the carrots will absorb that acidity. A white cloudy brine and tiny bubbles are healthy signs. Surface kahm yeast (flat, white film) is harmless — skim and discard. Any fuzzy, raised, or colored mold means discard the whole batch.

04 When the carrots have reached your preferred sourness — typically pleasantly tangy but still recognizably carrot — seal the jar tightly and move it to the refrigerator. Cold temperatures slow the fermentation dramatically, but do not stop it entirely: the carrots will continue to acidify slowly over weeks, growing more complex and funkier with age. They are immediately edible upon refrigerating but are often best at the 2 to 4 week mark, when the flavors have had time to meld and the brine has fully penetrated the carrot flesh. They keep refrigerated for up to 3 months.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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