



## Korean kimchi made in Canada

Kimchi is to Koreans what the potato is to Canadians. It is a spicy side dish, usually based on Chinese cabbage, daikon radish or cucumbers, to which is added red hot pepper powder, garlic, ginger and shrimp paste. All of these ingredients are then partially fermented. Although there are over 20 different types of kimchi, the very spicy, slightly acidic taste remains a standard.

The popularity of kimchi is attributed to its unique flavour and fermentation. Many consider this food rich in vitamins and proteins as a functional food, i.e., a food with beneficial health properties. According to a 2002 *Toronto Sun* article, Toronto residents originally from Korea attributed their resistance to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) to their daily consumption of kimchi. The increased world demand for kimchi is a sign of its growing popularity. In 2004, Korean exports of kimchi amounted to US\$102.7 million.

However, kimchi can only be kept for about a month. Koreans like it slightly acidic and eat it before the fermentation process is completed. Research laboratories have

tried to prolong its shelf life while keeping the taste characteristics intact. A kimchi university has even been opened in Korea. After working with fermented vegetables, an Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research team in Saint-Hyacinthe began to study this product. The team headed up by Tony Savard discovered a mixed starter (a cocktail of fermentative bacteria and yeast) that ensures controlled fermentation and provides a shelf life of more than one year without pasteurization or preservatives. The technique can also be used to reproduce the same taste year after year. The process will be used for industrial-scale production, and sensory studies have been conducted to determine consumer preferences. Industrial production of this kimchi has begun in fall 2005.

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