

## Quick-Fix, IMPATIENT Pickles (*Sokuseki-Zuké*)

Many pickles require extended time to mature and are then put aside for long-term storage – delayed gratification. In contrast, Impatient Pickles take only minutes (or at most an hour or so) to fully develop and are best enjoyed immediately (though they could be saved for a day or two in the refrigerator) – a bit of quick-fix satisfaction. Quick-fix pickles are meant to use what you have: beginning-to-wilt cabbage, stubby carrot and/or cucumber ends, peels and trimmings of fruit and vegetables that remain after making other dishes. Be sure your fruit and vegetables have not been waxed or treated to other chemical sprays; these cannot be easily removed post-harvest. If in doubt, do not use.

*Hakusai no Ichiya-Zuké* (One-Night-Stand Napa Cabbage Pickles)

### 白菜の一夜漬け

This is a classic salt-rubbed (*shio momi*) brine-pickle. The intensity of flavor can be adjusted by length of time allowed to sit in the brine. Spiciness can be adjusted by the red chili peppers and other aromatics.



Makes 8-10 portions

8-10 ounce/250-300 grams wedge *hakusai* (Napa cabbage)

2 teaspoons coarse sea salt

1 inch/6-7 cm piece *kombu* cut into many fine strips

*tōgarashi* chili pepper, broken into pieces with most of the seeds removed

*yuzu* peel cut into many fine strips

Wash your cabbage if need be to remove any soil that might be caught between layers. Blot dry and trim away any yellowing or blackened areas (these can be added to your compost heap). Cut the cabbage into coarse shreds. Place the shreds in a bowl or heavy-duty plastic bag and sprinkle with salt; toss lightly. When moisture is clearly visible (the salt leaches out liquid from the cabbage), add strips of *kombu* and broken bits of *tōgarashi* chili pepper.

Begin with gentle squeezing motions increasing pressure as the amount of liquid increases. This action is called *shio-momi* and is the first and essential stage of transforming vegetables into quick pickles. When the mass is wilted and limp, add the *yuzu* peel and set aside with whatever liquid has accumulated in the bottom of the bowl or bag.

**If you have a *shokutaku tsukémono ki*** transfer the wilted vegetables, brine, kelp and chili pepper to the bowl of the pickling pot. Screw the top in place under maximum pressure and marinate for at least 30 minutes at room temperature, and up to 24 hours, refrigerated.

**If you want to devise a quick-pickle set-up,** use a heavy-duty, re-sealable, gallon-sized clear plastic bag, 2 flat trays or cookie sheets and some heavy objects such as canned goods or a gallon-sized jar filled with water (weighs about 1.5 pounds). You will need to apply a total of 3 or 4 pounds of weight. Transfer the wilted vegetables, brine, and kelp to the bag and flatten it to distribute contents evenly. Sandwich the bag between two flat trays or cookie sheets. Place weights on top and allow them to sit, undisturbed, for at least 30 minutes, or a full day if refrigerated.

**NOTE:** The addition of kelp will cause the brine to become slightly sticky. The kelp, too, will become a bit slippery. This is a good sign – evidence that the natural glutamates in the kelp are doing their flavor-enhancing work.

**To serve as salt-rubbed pickles,** just before serving, rinse the vegetables under cold water and drain. Squeeze lightly coaxing into a cylinder. Place the cylinder upright in a bowl pressing on the bottom end to create a stable mounded hill. Quick-fix pickles can also be served as individual mounds, made in the same fashion. For those who like the nutty flavor of sesame, garnish the plated pickles with toasted seeds.

