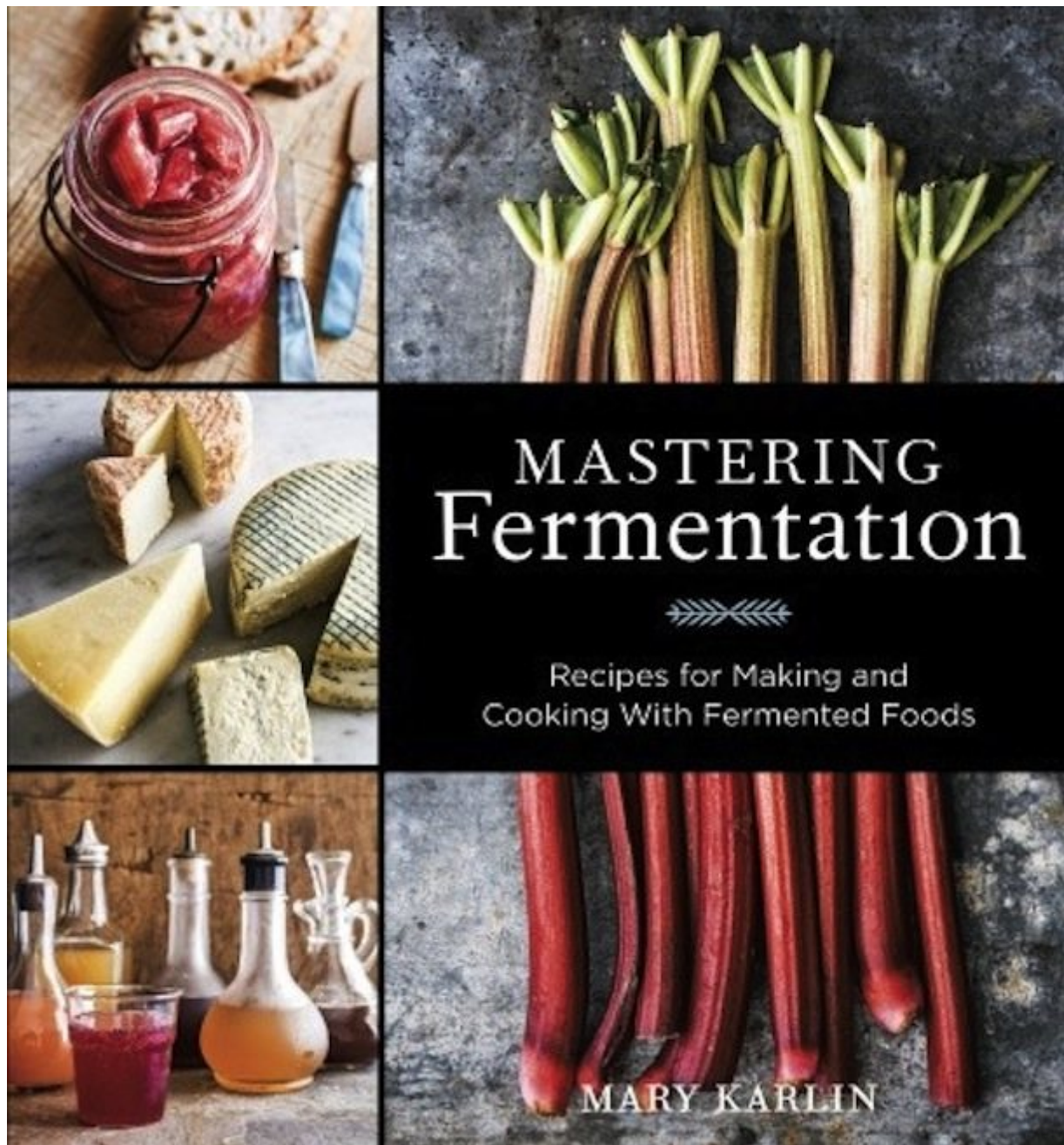


# Cook the Book: 'Mastering Fermentation'

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A few years ago, I worked on developing a recipe for homemade vinegar. I read just about every book I could find on the subject, and couldn't find a single recipe that explained, with confidence, how to make it. There are plenty of books with vinegar guides or vinegar suggestions, but few (if any) recipes to use as a solid reference. As I kept reading, I realized that this philosophical ("hippie," if you will) approach to explaining wild fermentation was pretty much the norm. Over time, I grew to love these books, but I couldn't help but wish that there was a book out there for the nerdy recipe stickler in me.

Finally, I've found one. *Mastering Fermentation*, the new book from cheese maker and cooking teacher **Mary Karlin**, is a thorough (and gorgeous) collection of actual recipes for just about any ferment you might want to make at home.

Beer, salami, yogurt, cheese, and, yes, vinegar are all there, along with recipes for several Asian ferments, like soy sauce, ponzu, and bran-fermented pickles, that are relative rarities in American cookbooks.

Karlin delves just enough into the science behind each ferment that you're bound to learn something new without getting too bogged down in the minutiae. This approach also makes it possible to use her recipes as launching pads for later experimentation. For me at least, once I know the reason why a ferment works the way it does, I feel confident in playing around with it more.

Helpfully, she also includes timelines at the beginning of each recipe. You'll know, for instance, that it takes a year to make the aforementioned soy sauce before diving in a week before your Japanese-themed dinner party. And in addition to the long, informational intro and FAQ in the book, Karlin has also launched a [website](#) for the book as a resource for all curious cooks.

Yet, while Karlin does recognize that there are uncontrollable variances any time you're using wild fermentation, she is a surprising stickler for things like cooking and storage vessels. It would have been helpful for the book to include a variety of options with each recipe, as well as a list of things you absolutely shouldn't use. I, for one, keep a huge collection of mason jars, but have little in the way of ceramic crocks—I would have liked to know when is it appropriate to substitute.

It's going to be a fun week of recipes over here on [Cook the Book](#) while we try out a range of (relatively) short-term ferments. We'll start out easy, with a simple fermented **tomato ketchup** and a totally-from-scratch recipe for **chipotles in adobo**. Then we'll move on to mysterious **Japanese bran-fermented pickles**, called *nuka*. Later, we'll try our hand at making **water kefir** before culminating our week of ferments with **homemade cream cheese**.

## Win 'Mastering Fermentation'

Thanks to our wonderful friends at Ten Speed Press, we have five (5) copies of Mastering Fermentation to give away this week. All you need to do for a chance to win is tell us about **your favorite fermented food or drink** in the comments section below.