

**Prep:** 30 min

**Fermentation:**  
2 weeks  
to 2 months

**Makes:** about  
4 cups/1 litre

**Vegan**

13 oz/380 g washed  
and stemmed sweet  
red peppers

3½ oz/100 g peeled  
garlic (about 2 large  
heads; preferably  
organic)

1.3 oz/36 g sea salt  
or any unrefined or  
kosher salt (do not  
use iodized table  
salt)

1 lb 9 oz/  
720 g washed and  
stemmed chili  
peppers

Optional additions:  
fruit (stone fruit,  
berries), vegetables  
(such as carrots,  
onions, shallots—raw,  
roasted, or grilled),  
herbs

Filtered water, as  
needed (optional)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**  
For reliable fermenting,  
the ratio of vegetables  
to salt is crucial, so it  
is better to work by  
weight than volume  
(see more in Tips). All of  
the vegetable weights  
given here are after  
they have been cleaned  
and trimmed.

REBEKKA HUTTON  
**FERMENTED HOT SAUCE**

**Rebekka is another alumna** from the early days of The Dep's rental kitchen. She had just returned from California where artisanal fermenting was much further developed than in Toronto. She set about establishing a new company, Alchemy Pickle, which continues to thrive more than a decade later. When she outgrew our space, she took a bit of The Dep DNA with her, sharing her kitchen with other fledgling food entrepreneurs.

In a food processor, purée the sweet peppers, garlic, and salt. Add the chili peppers and any optional fruits/veggies and blend until fairly smooth. A little filtered or boiled and cooled water can be added to help with blending or if the pepper mix is looking rather dry. You will have roughly 5 cups/1.25 litres.

Wash a 2-quart/2-litre jar or two 1-quart/1-litre jars well in hot soapy water and rinse well. Place the jar(s) in an empty sink and sanitize by carefully pouring just boiled water inside. Discard the water and wait for the jar(s) to cool.

Pour the pepper purée into the jar(s). Only fill the jar(s) 70 to 75 percent full to allow for expansion during active fermentation. Stirring often in the first week will help keep it from bubbling up too much. Loosely lid and label the jar(s) with the date and ingredients and place in a cool spot. The ideal temperature is 64° to 68°F/18° to 20°C, but anywhere between 61° and 79°F/16° and 26°C will work (see Tips).

**TIPS:**

*The ratio of salt to vegetables by weight is crucial: The salt should be 3 percent of the weight of the vegetables. So, for example, for 1,000 g of peppers plus vegetables you need 30 g salt (3 percent by weight).*

*On the other hand, the ratio of garlic to peppers, hot peppers to sweet peppers, or other additions can be adjusted according to your flavour preferences and what you have available.*

*The hotter the peppers, the hotter the sauce! For this recipe I used 30 medium-hot chilies (1½ lb/690 g) and about 18 hot Thai bird's eye chilies (1 oz/30 g).*

*The spice level can be reduced somewhat by removing the seeds from the chilies.*

For the first 3 to 7 days, stir carefully each day with a super-clean utensil. Make sure not to close the lid tightly as pressure will build up inside the jar(s). If you see any white film on the surface forming, this should be skimmed off. It is still safe! After the first week, you can stir less often—maybe once a week. Try to taste how the flavour is changing each time you stir. You will notice as time passes that the pepper mash will take longer to separate and will taste more sour. After a few weeks it will be more cohesive. I like to ferment mine for about 2 months, but you can put it into the fridge once it has stopped separating and tastes great after a minimum of 2 weeks.

At this stage, you could blend further for a smoother hot sauce, or even run through a sieve to remove the seeds. Sterilize and label/date some smaller jars or bottles and decant your hot sauce into them before lidding and storing in the fridge. This should be safe to enjoy for a year or more.

*The warmer the ambient temperature, the faster the fermentation will be, and you'll have to keep a closer eye on it and stir it more often.*

*You can always add a little water after fermenting if the sauce is too thick.*

*Given the time and labour involved, and the longevity of the finished product, it's worth making a large batch; it also helps for more reliable fermentation.*

*Wear gloves and work in a well-ventilated area when dealing with hot peppers.*

*When washing the food processor bowl or any jars that had chili pepper purée in them, rinse in cold water first so you don't inhale spicy steam. Then wash with hot soapy water very well, and then do it again to remove all residual oil from the hot peppers.*



*Growing up, there wasn't a lot of money... My grandmother was always cooking and sharing food with everyone. She always made it seem kind of effortless. Her garden was huge, and she was producing huge amounts of food and just giving it to neighbours. So, there were these feelings, feelings of abundance. That's how we were rich, you know, rich like we have too many beans.*



**Rebekka Hutton** is the pickle maker and owner of Alchemy Pickle Company, with seasonal fermented vegetable pickles, sauerkraut, and kimchi, and naturally carbonated kombucha all made with produce purchased directly from certified organic Southern Ontario farmers.  
**@alchemypicklecompany**