



DIARY

OF A

CAREGIVER

Stephanie Föhr
Linnaeus University, VT20
Master Design+Change

Food. **Fermentation**. Exploring fields that are new to me. Dear diary,
with you I want to capture my impressions, feelings, thoughts of
this **experimental exploration**. Self-care, caring for with others,
humans or not, planet Earth. How can **care** look like? What role
will it have in my life? What does it need? Time? Energy?
Passion? Compassion? Empathy?



2020/03/30

Let's get **hands-on**. More than just reading, than being in my head. Practise. Jars, cabbage, carrots, kitchen tools, salt. Observing and documenting. Thinking through but also letting go. **No right or wrong**. I just want to explore. I care. But does this imply certain results? Breaking down the vegetables, creating surface. Freedom of shape and form. Focusing. Time passes by. Salting. Massaging the food. Salt tickling my hands. Moist. Veggies letting go of their juices. Packing. Thoughtful. But with pressure. Feeling my arm muscles from the massage. Finding space. Shelf. **Curious** what the next days will bring. Creating labels.



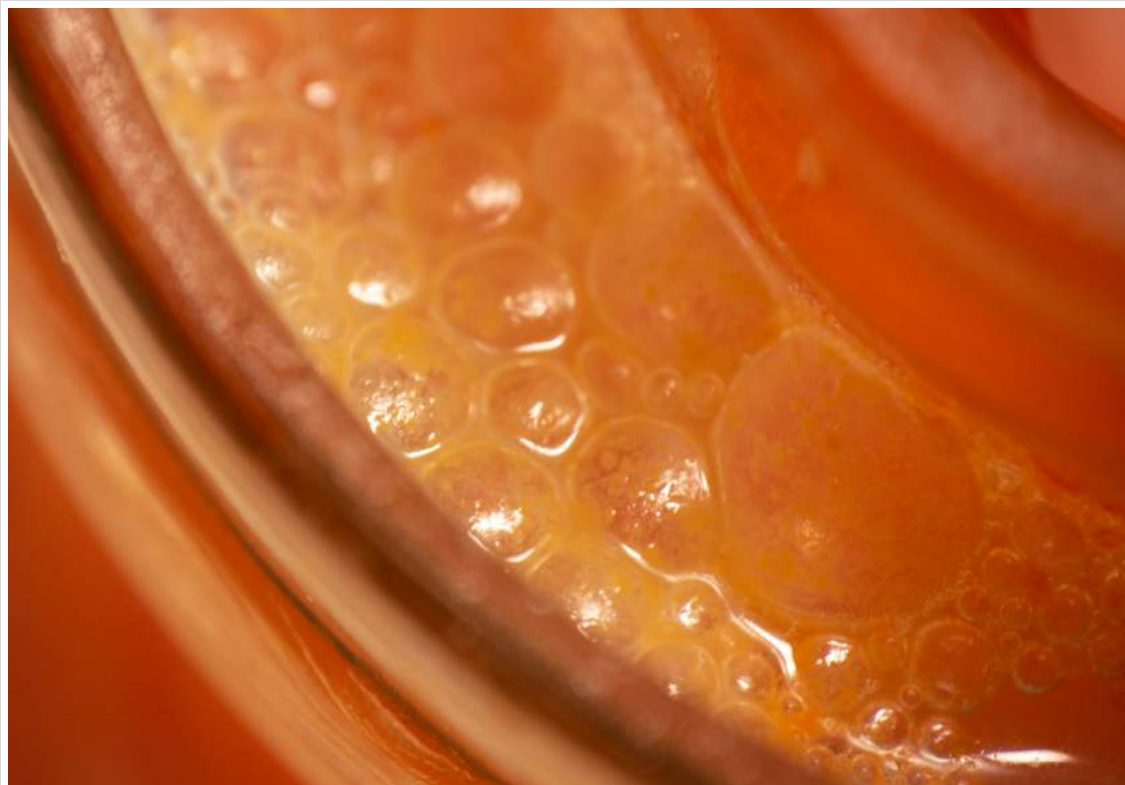
2020/03/31

Opening the lids daily. **Releasing. Pressure.** Tension. Overflow.
The liquids of the carrot jar finding their way outside. From now
using plates to put underneath. Only in this jar tiny bubbles. Cannot
even capture it with the camera. Filling up the brine level in one of
the cabbage jars. Fully **submersion**. Using senses. Smell no difference
yet. **Time.** Allowing process. **Slow. Mindful.** Exploration. Curiosity.



2020/04/01

Time for care again. Have to admit that it is **challenging** to prioritize time, to dedicate time. But **rewarding**. Very recognizable bubbles today. Fascinating to capture in macro. Carrots got a bit more sour taste than the cabbage already. **Bubbling. Plop!** Exploring with my senses. **Listening deeply.** Hearing the microbes "work". First taste test. Slightly sour. Again carrots more than cabbage. In one cabbage jar, I have to push the leaves down again. The other jars have a more solid cabbage leaf lid. Carefully lifting it to catch for a taste test. Finally, time to stick-on labels. A quite plop in my apartment later the day.



2020/04/02

Not many differences compared to yesterday. **Patience.** Waiting. Curiosity. Carrots seem to ferment faster. Taste quite good already. Have to stop me from eating it directly at once. I want to explore with **different time spans** especially since I have multiple batches of cabbage.

2020/04/03

Less bubbling. **Pushing down** what reached the surface. Some taste tests. Slow process. **Shaking** the jars a bit to prevent mould on the surface to gather.





2020/04/04

Daily check how my fermentation experiments are going on.

Maintenance. Pushing down. Testing taste. Discovering stains of rust on the inside of a metal lid. Even though I covered them with coconut oil. To care **does not always work out**. Fermentation at home is still an experimental practice. Covering the jar with paper towels for now. I will replace it with another lid soon. Carrots are "ready" to move from the shelf into the fridge. Sour but still crunchy. Every bite results in a funny sound in my ear. Dinner as a **multi-sensory experience**.



2020/04/05

Caring with my fermentation jars is becoming a daily **habit**. Definitely easier since I currently spend most of the time in my apartment anyhow. Rarely do the caring tasks at the exact same time but always in the late afternoon/early evening. Less and less bubbling. After the first more intense days fermentation seems to **slow down**. Having the rest of the carrots for dinner. A mix of fine slices and bigger pieces. **Texture. Crunch. Sourness** that tickles my mouth.



2020/04/06

One week since the start of the cabbage and carrot batches. And just today realized that I mixed up two labels with each other. Time for **tasting** and comparing. The mix of cabbage and carrot needs to move into the fridge soon, I believe. Carrots getting really **sour** while the cabbage is still **mild**. Nice **mix** though. Since there are fewer bubbles, time to close the lid of the bigger jar. Without the rubber layer still space for gas to get out. Or liquid as I could experience while shaking it...



2020/04/07

Visual sense. Cabbage over time to a darker beige-yellow shade. Already curious to see if those changes going to be visible in the photography documentation. Capturing the **process**. Other than that, daily chore of pushing under the brine. While trying to use as little cutlery as possible. Putting it on my **hand** before tasting. **No double-dipping** to avoid spoilage.



2020/04/08

Almost forgot today to look after my fermentation jars. Already so well integrated into my apartment. Detecting them shortly before leaving the house. Just **quickly** pushing down.



2020/04/09

Three different jars. Same time started. Three different levels of sourness. From very mild to ready to transfer into the fridge. Mixing carrots and cabbage results in a **mild-sour combination**. Slowing down in the fridge from now.



2020/04/10

Caring with the two cabbage jars that are left in the shelf.

Pushing down and **fishing of** the cabbage that reached the surface.

While one jar is building more and more **juices**, the other does not.

Trying a **zip-lock bag** filled with brine as fermentation **weight** in this one. Not the most sustainable choice though.

2020/04/11

Having a bit of the carrot and cabbage mix for dinner. No **brine** on the top when I took the jar out of the fridge. Pushing down the vegetables again and using a **shot glass** to create more tension to the surface. Brine coming up. Also caring with the cabbage jars from the shelf. The small jar created more and more brine. But no bubbles anymore. Carefully taking the plastic bag weight out of the other jar. It works pretty well as weight to keep the food submerged. But kind of messy to put it in and out every day. Potentially I also do not have to do that every day.





2020/04/12

Liquid on the plate. Plastic bag not properly sealed. Drying it.
Discovering some **white spots and stains** on the cabbage **leaves** that cover this jar. Was the plastic bag not clean enough? Is it **mould**?
Not fluffy. Yet. Keep observing the next few days. Replacing the bag with a paper towel again. The other jar is alright.



2020/04/13

Munching on fermentation mix out of carrots and cabbage for lunch. Jar **half empty** now. Need to **transfer** it into a smaller one to avoid too much oxygen. Fermentation creates **living food**. It still requires care. Is it an **endless process**? Buying new fruits and vegetables for more experiments. Individual and as part of my game events. Sterilizing jars—also a part of care. White transformations now in both cabbage jars. Still does not look like mould though. Replacing the cabbage leaves that I used as weights with new ones. Fully submerged.

2020/04/14



First trial with **fruits** today. Mixing apple and carrots. Grating them. Apple is so soft that it does not really become solid pieces like the carrots. More like a **puree**. Anyhow giving it a **try**. Salting. Massaging. Creating a big **mess** while packing it into the jar. I push down. Food pushes itself up. Brine everywhere. **Cleaning** is caring too. Also caring with the cabbage. Does not smell that fermented anymore now covered with the fresh leaves. Let's see what happens with the carrot apple mix next. Putting a bowl underneath to save the brine in case of overflow.



2020/04/15

Carefully opening the closed lid of the cabbage. **Plop!** The renewed leaves keep the cabbage down well. A good amount of brine on top. The new cabbage does not taste fermented yet. Just eating the pieces that swim on the surface. **First few bubbles** recognizable in the apple and carrot mix. **Fascinating.** Bright orange brine. **Saltiness** dominates the carrot taste so far.

2020/04/16

Dinner. A mix of carrots and cabbage. Slightly less crunchy. Honesty.
When does **caring** become an **obligation**? A **burden**? How to handle
the **stress** that it can cause? Priorities. Sometimes there is just
no **time**, nor **energy** left to care with one thing when other things
seek your care. The first day where I did not manage. Let's see
the effects.



2020/04/17

Pushing down. Bubbling up. **Action? Reaction?** Those bubbles are still so fascinating for me. **Expression.** Language. Process. Practice. **More than human.** Ecosystem. Exploration.



2020/04/19

When is it **care** and when **control**? Letting go. No active caring with the fermented food yesterday. How much human influence is even required? Does it make a difference when I care? Or is it enough when microbes and food care together? What is **our role**?



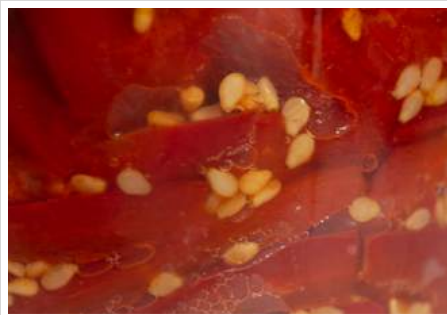
2020/04/20

Excitement. Have not made taste tests in a while. Cabbage first. Seems as my **taste buds** get used to fermented cabbage. Start to like even sauerkraut. Not even so sour to me anymore. But starting to get less crunchy. Putting one jar after 20 days into the fridge, leaving the other outside for further experimentation. Carrot and apple mix next. **Surprisingly sour. Tickling** my tongue and lips extremely. After five days already. Might be due to the high amount of sugar in apples.



2020/04/21

Observing from a **distance**. Letting the fermentation jars sit in my shelf. Yesterday evening during my first game event I fermented bell pepper and added some sesame seeds to it. **Curious** if and how it affects the **taste**.



2020/04/22

Another game event today. More participants. Fermenting as a **collective activity**. Exploration. Fermenting zucchini. Lots of juices through this watery vegetable. Finally figuring out the right **jar size** at the third trial. Hard to keep the cabbage leaves in place. Using some wooden toothpicks to secure them. Nevertheless quite a lot of tiny zucchini particles on the surface. Hope this will not cause problems. Having the carrot and apple mix for dinner with fresh sourdough bread. **Fermentation buddies**. Giving the mix a rinse though to get rid of the tickling effect.



2020/04/23

After taking the bell pepper jar out of the bowl yesterday to put this **bowl** underneath the zucchini, overflow today. Listening to the bubbles while looking at the mess they created. Have to think of leaving two fingers width space in the jar to prevent these **messy overflow situations** in the future. Putting a bowl again. Tasting it in the evening. Already **tickling taste** after three days of fermentation. Moving into the fridge. With the bowl. In the zucchini jar first **bubbles like foam from dishwashing soap**. Pretty weird smell but good taste. But too early to recognize changes in the taste. **Time**. A huge factor in fermentation.



2020/04/24

More **foamy bubbles**. **Weird smell**. How is this going to turn out?

Plan to do pancakes out of the fermented zucchini. But first waiting.

Patience. **Process**. Curiosity.





2020/04/25

Texture. **Crunchlessness.** Zucchini experimentation. Moving it into the fridge after three days already before it loses more **texture.** If this is even possible. Changing not losing. **Transformation.** Finishing the sauerkraut directly out of the cooled jar. One left in the shelf. New fresh cabbage waiting in the fridge to get processed. Caring with the cabbage.

2020/04/26



Inspired by Korean kimchi pancakes. Mixing the fermented zucchini with some flour and guar gum. **Freestyle**. Frying them up as pancakes/patties. Shrinking. Four small but delicious patties. Lots of caring. **Dedicating time** for food preparation. **Mindfulness**. Time to care with the two cabbage heads waiting in the fridge. White and red. Grating and chopping. Patience. Takes quite a while. Cabbage juice getting one with my **hands** and **colouring** them. Not a big deals since so much hand washing involved in the process anyhow. Inspired by the input of the last **naming** the fermented cabbage: Violet. **New roommate**.



2020/04/27

Preparation. **Sterilizing jars** in the oven. Going to the supermarket to get new vegetables. During today's game event I fermented a mix of sweet potato and shallots. **Spiced** with curry powder and black peppercorns. Already the smell makes me **hungry**. The shallots make me **cry**. Exploring with all **senses** and encouraging my **co-learners** to do so as well. (Sweet) Caroline. A new **companion** that sits together with the cabbage jars in my shelf. Might try another round of frying up fermented food once it is "ready".



2020/04/28

Observing my new companions from my desk. Recognizing the **earthy smell** of the fermenting cabbage or catching the **gas** bubbling up to the surface. Overflow of one of the jars. Leaving a purple stain in the bowl underneath. **Colour changes**. Cabbage mix out of white and red cabbage turning from dark purple to more violet/pink shades. Pink bubbles. Caring a lot to capture this beautiful phenomenon. Then **frustration**. Technical issues made those pictures disappear. The moment is at least captured in my head.



2020/04/29

The **smell** of **soil**. Mixing with **sourness**. For a moment I was wondering where this strange smell is coming from when I woke up in the morning. Later, when I passed by my shelf, I realized that it is the fermenting cabbage. **Slowly integrating** into my apartment.



2020/04/30

One month since I started to **play** with fermentation. With exploring. **Sensing**. Trial. Error. Frustration. Motivation. Excitement. Fascination. Patience. **Empathy**. Looking back to what happened already and forward to what will happen. **Gratefulness**.



2020/05/01

Caring with Caroline. A mix of sweet potato, shallots, black pepper-corns, curry. So far **spiciness** dominates over fermentation **flavour**. Curious if and how this will change over time. One-month-old napa cabbage. Became darker over time. **Less crunchy**. Moving it into the fridge to not encourage the change of texture even more. Violet. A mix of red and white cabbage. Still bubbling but less. The strong smell is also gone or I got used to it. Changing the shot glass in one of the jars to a smaller one to close the lid properly. A lot of **brine** seems to be **evaporated** since it was only covered with a paper towel.



2020/05/02

Some cabbage parts always find their way to the **surface** again.
Need to push down. Especially the brine out of one jar seems to
continuously evaporate. So I **filled it up** with some cabbage brine
from the same batch that I stored in the fridge in the meanwhile.

2020/05/04

After **taking a break** from physically caring yesterday, filling up another cabbage jar with brine from the fridge. Time for **quick lunch**. Bell pepper sesame mix. Really **soft texture**. But a nicely fermented taste. Sesame seeds did not seem to have had any **impact**. Another **experimentation learning**.



2020/05/09

Time for more experimentation with the **frying** of fermented foods. Caroline—sweet potato, shallots, black peppercorns, curry. **Stimulating** different **taste buds**. Sorting out the peppercorns while eating. **Careful eating process**. Not so careful apparently while pushing down one of the shot glasses that I use as fermentation weight in one cabbage jar. Pressure. Cracking. **Shards of glass**. Unfortunately, I have to throw out this fermenting food in the middle of the process. **Safety**.





2020/05/10

Caring with friends, acquaintances, strangers. **Co-learning**. As part of today's fermentation event, I fermented yellow bell pepper. Again with black peppercorn since I really liked them in the sweet potato shallot mix. **Naming** it Paola. How does it **affect** us to give our food a name? Is it **humanizing**? Taking over **control**? Claiming **ownership**? Or just a way to feel more **attached**? To **encourage** care?

2020/05/17

Guilty conscience. Have not cared with Paola for one week. Neither with the other fermentation jars sitting on my shelf. Carefully opening up by removing the paper towel from the bell pepper jar. Slightly **white film** but **disappearing** once I am stirring the pieces. Tasting. Surprise. Fermentation has not got too far yet. Allowing it more time to continuously ferment. One of the cabbage jars moves into the fridge but not before adding a bit of it to my dinner **salad**. I moreover used some leftover **brine** to **deglaze** fried potatoes. So delicious.





2020/05/19

Opening up the bell pepper jar again. **Stronger white film.** The smell of yeast. A lot of brine has gathered in the little glass bowl I used as fermentation weight. Yeasty flakes. Quick research shows that it is most likely **kahm yeast. Harmless.** Easy to remove with a spoon. Using my senses and the experience of others to evaluate. **Trust.** Giving the bell pepper a rinse under water before eating it with some crispbread for dinner. The two other cabbage jars are ready to move into the fridge as well.

Almost two months have passed since starting with this **hands-on** part of my **playful exploration** of fermentation. **Beyond human (self-) care.** My shelf is empty. But I am full of **experiences.** Ups and downs. Enthusiasm and surprises. **Caring with.** Time. Energy. Dedication. Gratefulness. This is not the end, dear diary. It was just the beginning. Looking for other more than human encounters to care with. **Thank you for accompanying me** on my journey.

