

Profile from the Field

Contact: Marie Flanagan, NCR SARE Communications Specialist
120 BAE, Univ. of Minnesota | 1390 Eckles Ave. | St. Paul, MN 55108
ph. 612.625.7027 | f. 612.626.3132 | mart1817@umn.edu

Fermenting for Value Added Vegetables

Project Title: Adding Value to Vegetables Through Live Fermentation

Coordinator: Chris Chmiel

Location: Piketon, OH

SARE Grant: \$6,000

Duration: 2010

To read the full project report, go to www.sare.org/projects and search for project number FNC10-825.

Fermentation is an ancient method of preserving fresh vegetables and other foods for later use. It is accomplished due to lactic acid-producing bacteria, which lower the pH of these foods.

Chris Chmiel, co-owner of Integration Acres Ltd., applied for an NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher grant and learned that fermentation could be profitable and add value to his vegetable production. While the idea of fermenting vegetables started because one of his employees had an interest, Chmiel now sells several fermented products, including kimchi, sauerkraut, and sour pickles.

Chmiel experimented with various crops, techniques, recipes, and marketing strategies to find the most profitable fermented products for further development. Throughout this process he worked with the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Division to ensure that his fermenting practices were safe, and with consumers to ensure that the products would be satisfying and marketable. Chmiel made adjustments to his process and kept meticulous notes, which he has shared at various workshops.

Workshops were held in conjunction with Community Food Initiatives and at two Ohio Pawpaw Festivals. These workshops reached more than 85 people, and offered information on the basics of fermentation, taste testing, and a question and answer session.



*Chmiel struggled to prevent brine from leaking from plastic deli containers.
Photo by Chris Chmiel.*

Chris Chmiel's presentation at the 2014 Farmers Forum can also be viewed online through NCR-SARE's YouTube playlist.

Visit www.youtube.com/NCRSAREvideo and search "Chris Chmiel" to watch it.

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