

THE DIGGERS CLUB

THE *Secret* TO BLACK GARLIC



ABOUT BLACK GARLIC

Rising in popularity over the last decade, Black Garlic is not a new variety, but rather a very old method of preserving this versatile crop.

The art of preserving garlic in this way began in Korea, which is no surprise as they have used fermentation and other natural processes to improve the flavour and preserve various produce for centuries. While it is rumoured to grant immortality, improve longevity, and increase vitality; there is no denying that it has a flavour and texture all of its own, which is why top chefs have embraced this 'new' ingredient, using it in dressings, sauces and syrups, where its subtle flavour adds depth and complexity to any meal.

Black Garlic has a flavour that is both sweet and savoury, lending itself to use in desserts as well as main meals. Different palettes describe the flavour in different ways, from dark caramel and chocolate, to molasses and balsamic vinegar, and even fig and Worcestershire sauce. Whatever the description, everyone agrees that the flavour is superb and subtle (much like a truffle).

Aged slowly in a controlled environment (heat and humidity), the cloves slowly 'caramelize' turning black when ready. There is actually no fermentation involved, but rather long, slow roasting, and we all know how delicious roasted garlic is!

The long, slow cooking process breaks down the enzymes which are the tangy flavours present in raw garlic. In the right conditions it starts the Maillard reaction, which produces new flavour compounds that are more complex (like the flavour of caramelised onion vs fresh onion).

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN BLACK GARLIC

1. The most popular garlic for use in Black Garlic are purple Turban varieties such as 'Tasmanian Purple' (pictured above), 'Flinders Island Purple', 'Mammoth Purple', 'Foster Purple', 'Early Purple' and 'Monaro Purple'.
2. Use a slow cooker, rice cooker, yoghurt maker or sous vide (temperature-controlled water bath) that can be set at 60°C for 30 days (this is often the 'keep warm' setting). It needs to be as airtight as possible, otherwise you need to wrap the individual garlic heads in foil (to maintain moisture).
3. Put the garlic into the cooker and do not add anything else. Simply set and forget.
4. After 20 days they should be black with a paste-like texture. After 30-40 days they will be more jelly-like. Try both to see which style you prefer.
5. Remove all from the cooker and place on a wire rack to cool. When the outer skins are dry, peel and place the cloves in an airtight container in the fridge. Black Garlic will store safely like this for several months.

NOTE: The blacker the cloves, the sweeter the flavour.

Do not check often, as it needs to be a sealed environment to maintain moisture. It's OK to test at 20 days and then 30 days, to see if they need a little longer. In a sous vide, seal multiple bags with only 2-3 heads of garlic per bag.



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