

MARCH 30 - APRIL 5, 2012

CURRENTS

The News-Review's guide to arts, entertainment and television

Kitchen culture

*Oakland resident's book says
fermentation furnishes valuable nutrients*

MICHAEL SULLIVAN/The News-Review

INSIDE: What's Happening/3 Calendar/6 Galleries/10 Movie Review/11 TV/15

Kitchen culture

Oakland resident's book says fermentation furnishes valuable nutrients

RYAN IMONDI

The News-Review

OAKLAND — Wardeh Harmon preaches the powers of fermentation. Pickles, sauerkraut and bread, all cultured on her farm outside Oakland, represent a life-improving necessity for her.

She networks with fermentation communities in Eugene and operates online courses called GNOWFGLINS, which stands for God's Natural, Organic, Whole Foods, Grown Locally, In Season.

"I love it because it's easy and because it's healthy," she said.

Harmon will have another outlet for sharing that love when her book, "A Complete Idiot's Guide to Fermentation," is released Tuesday.

The guide was a three-month project Harmon wrote last summer. It was contracted by The Complete Idiot's Guide series, a line of books that provides introductory overviews to numerous topics, including nearly every hobby in existence.

Brook Farling, senior acquisitions editor for the company, said he had considered other, more established authors to write the book. He decided on Harmon after visiting her website and being impressed by her fervor and her willingness to promote a book.

The book has 150 recipes with pictures and plenty of explanation on the benefits of eating fermented food. Harmon found it challenging to collect and organize



Yeast, molds and bacteria are used to produce fermented foods such as these seen in jars at Wardeh Harmon's home near Oakland.

MICHAEL SULLIVAN/The News-Review



MICHAEL SULLIVAN/News-Review photos

Fermented foods are not only good for the body but also promote eating foods in season, according to Harmon, who prepares a batch of sauerkraut in her home last week.

“ I love it because it's easy and because it's healthy. ”

Wardeh Harmon
Oakland

Fermenting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

materials for her first book while also managing her website. She said any free time was spent contributing to the book.

"It was quite the rigorous production schedule. It really did take over," she said.

Cheryl Owens, owner of Books Gallery in Sutherlin, said Harmon's practical knowledge is more accessible to consumers than an academic approach.

"She's worked really hard on her own," said Owens, whose bookstore will host Harmon on April 14 to celebrate the release. "She went through a lot of different diets and traditions."

Harmon became familiar with the topic while researching healthy lifestyles for her family. Books such as "Wild

If you go...

WHAT: Oakland-area author Wardeh Harmon signs copies of "A Complete Idiot's Guide to Fermenting Foods"

WHERE: Books Gallery, 220 Elkton-Sutherlin Highway, Sutherlin

WHEN: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday

COST: Free

INFORMATION: 541-459-0232

Fermentation" by Sandor Ellix Katz convinced Harmon that her three children could live healthier lives growing up on a diet rich with fermentation.

Now Harmon, 37, said she hopes to spread her discoveries to a larger audience, one made up of people who probably are largely unfamiliar with how fermentation works.

She explained that yeast, molds and bacteria are used to create foods such as pickles, sauerkraut, yogurt, milk and

bread, as well as beverages such as wine and beer. It takes organisms that are alive to create these foods.

Harmon said fermented food is "good for the gut and body." The organisms improve digestion by increasing enzyme consumption, increasing vitamin consumption and allowing the body to absorb more nutrients from food. She said it also promotes eating food that's in season, among other benefits.

Gerard Van Assche of the Umpqua Valley Brewer's Guild is an example of a handful of people who understand the concept and have used fermentation, in his case to make beer, Harmon said. Otherwise, she said, the practice has "unfairly" fallen out of public interest.

Fermentation found a stable existence in homes for generations. According to Harmon, evidence of the process has been found in ancient civilizations

such as Egypt, Babylon and pre-Hispanic Mexico. Those traditions, tweaked over thousands of years, were still in use in households in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

"Back in the day they would put vegetables in a can and let air and heat do all of the work," Harmon said.

Then came the modern supermarket of the mid-20th century that touted selection, convenience and, most important, items with long shelf lives. Canned foods were expected to last in kitchen cupboards for more than a year. Refinement and processing ruled supermarket shelves.

Harmon said this concept pushed fermentation out of supermarkets. Fermented foods could not be mass produced. In addition, the product was not always consistent. Its relatively short shelf life made it commercially unappealing. It became "something my

mom used to do" and soon "something my grandma used to do," Harmon said.

She added that people don't realize the ramifications of choosing convenience over bacteria that's crucial for good health.

Still, Harmon said she's seeing fermented foods make something of a comeback. Sherm's Thunderbird in Roseburg has a small section devoted to them, while certain restaurants offer the food.

Harmon said her book doesn't bring anything groundbreaking to the topic. But she doesn't think that's necessary for a practice that's been around for thousands of years.

Perhaps her book will help fermentation provide nutrients for a couple centuries more.

• You can reach reporter Ryan Imondi at 541-957-4211 or by email at rimondi@nrtoday.com.

Harry Potter adventures go on sale in e-book form

LONDON (AP) — At last, Harry Potter's adventures are available electronically.

The seven novels about J.K. Rowling's boy wizard are for sale as e-books and audio books on the author's Pottermore website, the site's creators announced Tuesday.

The books are currently available in English, in U.S. and U.K. editions, priced at \$7.99 or 4.99 British pounds for e-books and \$29.99 or 17.99 pounds for audio versions.

The site says French, Italian, German and Spanish editions

will follow in the coming weeks.

The books are available only through the website, which says they are compatible with major electronic e-readers, including Amazon's Kindle, Sony's Reader and Barnes & Noble's Nook, as well as with tablets, mobile phones and Google's Play digital store.

The Harry Potter novels have sold 450 million copies, but Rowling for years resisted making the books available in digital form.

She announced last year that Potter e-books would be sold

through the Pottermore site, an interactive portal into Harry's magical world.

The full site, which combines elements of virtual encyclopedia, computer games, social network and online store, is set to open in early April.

Its launch, originally announced for October, was delayed after testing with a limited number of users showed changes were needed.

Rowling's final Potter novel, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," was published in 2007.

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Tickets can also be purchased at Hanson Jewelers and Harvard Ave Drugs in Roseburg & Millsite Mercantile in Myrtle Creek