

PITCH DECK · 2026

FERMENT-ED

Duolingo for your gut.

An interactive learning site about fermentation, its history, and its microbes.

Joey Harwood · ferment-ed.app

The problem.

Gut health went mainstream.

A 2024 IFIC survey found that 63% of Americans consider gut health when choosing what to eat. Fermented food sales are growing at 8-10% a year. Kombucha is at Costco. Kimchi is at Trader Joe's.

But how do you actually learn it?

Options today: dense biology textbooks, hour-long YouTube deep dives, scattered Substack essays, or the same three articles Google surfaces every time. Nothing snackable. Nothing guided. Nothing fun.

The insight.

Duolingo took language learning, a hard, boring, high-drop-off task, and made it into a daily habit for 100M+ people. The formula was mascot + micro-lessons + playful stakes. Nothing has done this for gut health.

The microbiome is ready for its Duo moment.

The hook.

"The mascot is a real microbe."

Every character in Ferment-Ed maps to a real thing in fermentation biology or history. Ed the lead is a *Lactobacillus*, the genus behind sauerkraut, yogurt, kimchi, sourdough, and pickles. Four supporting characters map to the vagus nerve (the gut-brain science), ancient ceramic vessels (fermentation history), the SCOBY (kombucha and recipes), and kahm yeast (the safety notes and a recurring gag).

Curiosity gets a hook. The site earns its authority.

Three field trips.

Gut-Brain

with Buzz

The vagus nerve. The 90% of serotonin made in your gut. Why fermented food shows up in the Stanford 2021 inflammation study.

History

with Crock

13,000 years of human fermentation. Natufian beer. Jiahu rice-honey wine. Pasteur. Why beer may predate agriculture.

Recipes

with Scoby

The 2% salt rule. Sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha. What to do when the white stuff shows up (Skim: not mold).

A cast of five.

Every character maps to a real microbe, organ, or object in fermentation. No generic mascots. Each has a job in the site.

Ed	Lactobacillus	Site host. Introduces the trips. Hijacks the gut-brain module once.
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Buzz	Vagus nerve	Guides Trip 1: how your gut talks to your brain.
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Crock	Ancient ceramic pot	Guides Trip 2: 13,000 years of human fermentation history.
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Scoby	Kombucha mother	Guides Trip 3: home recipes and the 2% salt rule.
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Skim	Kahm yeast	Recurring gag in safety notes: not mold, please don't toss the batch.
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How it works.



Shake the jar

Interactive 3D mason jar. Three shakes with escalating flashes. Lid pops off. Bubbles erupt.



Ed says hi

The lead microbe waves. Points at the shelf of three field-trip jars.



Pick a trip

Tap any jar. Guide character opens the sheet from below. Order doesn't matter.



Learn a thing

Four to five swipeable cards. Sourced content. Optional curiosity check at the end.



Meet the crew

Complete all three, the crew gathers. Small confetti moment. That's it. Go make something bubble.

Why now.

\$1.4B

US fermented food market

Fermented food category growing 8-10% annually. Kombucha alone doubled 2019-2024.

90%

of serotonin in the gut

Gut-brain research went mainstream in 2021. The Stanford Cell study made every wellness podcast.

100M+

Duolingo daily actives

Duolingo proved that mascot-driven micro-learning holds people at scale. The playbook is public.

Where this goes.

"That's the crew. You're up to speed. Go make something bubble." is one ending. But it doesn't have to be the only one.



Season 2

More trips: dairy ferments, koji, sausage, sourdough deep dive, meads. Same crew, new episodes.



Ed's pantry

Companion app for tracking active ferments. Set a start date, get gentle nudges, share photos with the crew.



Community

Trade cultures, swap recipes, post batch pics. Local SCOBY hand-offs. A gentle, non-Instagram home.

Who's making this.



Joey Harwood

Kellogg MBA '27 · ex EY, Comcast NBCU, Intuitive Surgical

14 years across strategy consulting (EY Berlin, Bayer-Monsanto integration), customer experience (Comcast NBCU), and digital product lifecycle management (Intuitive Surgical, \$165M portfolio). Currently at Uncle May's Produce (food/ag data), acting Chief of Staff at Meemo (Kellogg Garage startup), Abrams Climate Fellow matched with Oatly.

Portfolio: Ferment-Ed · Geflecht · tumbly (Kellogg NVD winner) · 1PRIDE · stifledcreative.com



Come shake the jar.

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