



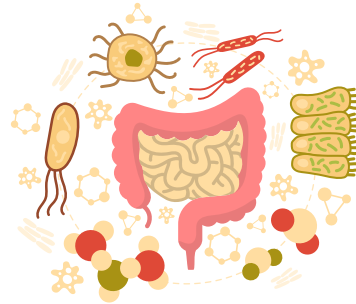
ferment your way to optimal health

A BOUNTIFUL SOURCE OF BENEFICIAL BACTERIA FOR YOUR GUT.

by Caroline Punch

The practice of fermentation has been around for centuries. However, its re-emergence as the latest buzzword in health news is reflected in the ever-expanding range of products, from kefir to kimchi, lining the shelves of our local health stores.

Fermentation is a process of converting starches and sugars in certain foods into lactic acid. This is a natural preservative which can kill harmful bacteria while promoting plenty of beneficial enzymes, highly supportive to our intestinal gut flora. This explains why our ancestors used this as a healthy method of food preservation.



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How fermented foods can benefit our health:

- The abundance of fermented foods in our ancestors' diets served not only the purpose of preservation and a satisfying taste, but more significantly, to ensure optimal gut health, and thus, overall health. The high density of good bacteria present in such food makes it an excellent natural probiotic source; by adding just a small portion to each meal, this can contain up to 100 times the amount of probiotics than that of a supplement.
- Given that up to 80% of our immune system is found in the gut, ensuring optimal gut function should be a priority for everybody. The probiotic properties in fermented and cultured foods support the development of the mucosal immune system in our digestive tract and protect against disease.
- A strong source of essential nutrients can be found in some fermented products such as Vitamin K2, which

is heart-protective, and B vitamins, which are essential for metabolism and red blood cell production.

- Detoxification can also be improved by eating fermented foods, as their beneficial bacteria can support the removal of harmful toxins from the body.

What to look for when purchasing fermented products:

It is important to start small when introducing fermented foods into your diet, gently working up to larger portions when your gut microbiota has had a chance to adjust.

- Kefir** - This can be made using dairy or coconut milk & kefir grains and can be found in the fridge in most health stores.
- Kimchi** - This fermented cabbage dish (a little spicier than sauerkraut), originated in Korea.
- Kombucha** - Originating in the Middle East many centuries ago, this is a fermented green or black tea

and can be found refrigerated in most health stores.

- Miso Paste** - This versatile condiment can be heated without compromising its beneficial bacteria and therefore it can be added to many hot meals, such as stir-fries, or made into a broth with seaweed and tofu.
- Sauerkraut** - A fermented cabbage dish which is a traditional food in Germany. Along with kimchi, this makes a lovely breakfast companion to poached eggs and avocado on toast.

Alternatively, it is very easy and cost-effective to make your own fermented foods at home, requiring only your chosen vegetables and a jar. The following beetroot and red cabbage sauerkraut recipe is a lovely, basic dish to get started with and can be tweaked as you become more adventurous with flavour combinations. The beetroot will not only add a warm, pink colour, but it is also rich in antioxidants and is a great source of minerals such as magnesium, manganese and potassium.



BEETROOT AND RED CABBAGE SAUERKRAUT

Ingredients:

Half medium red cabbage, diced finely
1 medium beetroot, peeled and grated
2 inch piece of ginger, peeled and grated
1 tsp sea salt*

*As needed only - Salt water mixture
- 1 tsp of sea salt dissolved into 1 cup of filtered water.

Instructions:

- In a large bowl, scrunch all of the ingredients together using your

hands. Continue until the juices from the vegetables start to collect in the bottom of the bowl.

- Transfer the mixture into a glass jar and press them in well. Ensure that the juices cover the mixture (by ½ - 1 inch) and, if necessary, add in more salted water.
- Finally, cover with a lid and allow to sit at room temperature for up to 7 days, or until it starts to taste sour.
- Keep in the refrigerator for up to 6 months in a sealed container and enjoy as a lovely addition to your sandwiches and salads.

BONUS RECIPE: SPICY KIMCHI

1 tbsp grated garlic
1 tsp grated ginger
1 tsp sugar
1-5 tbsp. red pepper flakes
(depending on how spicy you like it)
2-3 tbsp water or fish sauce

Simply make a paste of the above and add to the beetroot, cabbage and salt mixture, along with 100g of peeled, chopped radishes and 2 chopped scallions to add an extra punch of flavour.

So, whether you purchase a fermented product at a health store, or experiment with a homemade recipe, get going on your culturing journey. Your gut will thank you for it!

By Nutritionist and CNM graduate, Caroline Punch.

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