The Benefits of Sauerkraut

Before cabbage is fermented, it already has a host of health benefits. It is high in many vitamins and minerals, rich in antioxidants, have anti-inflammatory properties, and studies have shown that it may help lower cholesterol levels and help to combat pathogens. However, these health benefits are nothing compared to what happens to raw cabbage when it is lacto-fermented. Some nutritional benefits of fermented sauerkraut:

- Raw cabbage contains moderate amounts of vitamin C (around 30mg per cup). When you ferment cabbage (sauerkraut), the levels of vitamin C and antioxidants increase drastically. Studies have shown that levels of antioxidants and vitamin C in a cup of sauerkraut range from 57 to 695mg per cup (with raw, fermented red cabbage having the most vitamin C: almost 700mg per cup!)
- It is a good source of calcium and magnesium
- It is a very good source of dietary fibre, vitamin K, vitamin B6, folate, iron, potassium, copper and manganese.

History shows that fermented cabbage has been around for centuries. It seems to have originated in China, with workers of the Great Wall consuming it. When it travelled to Europe, Roman soldiers ate sauerkraut to help prevent intestinal problems during long military excursions. Soldiers ate fermented cabbage to help prevent disease while on long voyages: in the 1770s, Captain James Cook sailed around the world without losing a single sailor to scurvy, thanks to the dozens of barrels of sauerkraut on board.

Our colon contains many species of beneficial bacteria which feed on what's left over (waste) from the digestive process. As they do this, they create lactic acid. Without a good balance of these beneficial bacteria, our digestive tract becomes overrun by pathogenic bacteria, parasites and yeasts, leading to digestive disorders and more.
Sauerkraut provides a wide range of beneficial bacteria which can help us to digest our food. It contains many, many more living bacteria than a commercial probiotic that you can buy could provide. Dr. Mercola sent his sauerkraut to a lab to have it analysed and found that one 4-6 oz. serving had literally TEN TRILLION bacteria in it. This means that 2 oz. of fermented cabbage had more probiotics in it than a bottle of 100 count probiotic capsules! Besides the huge difference in the amount of probiotics contained per serving, fermented cabbage also has the advantage of being able to travel the entire distance of the digestive tract and help with the balance of flora, while probiotics tend to only reach the stomach or the upper part of the colon.

Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride, the founder of the GAPS Diet, states: “With every mouthful of sauerkraut you’re consuming billions of beneficial microbes which will be killing the pathogens in your gut driving them out and replenishing the beneficial flora in your digestive tract.”

“Great!” you may say. “I’ll go buy some sauerkraut right now!” The problem is, most of the sauerkraut you can purchase from the store (for example: ALL of the sauerkraut that’s available at your local supermarket contains very little in the way of beneficial bacteria. The kraut has been processed and pasteurized (usually in vinegar) to meet FDA standards, thus killing many of its beneficial properties in the process. To really get the full benefits of sauerkraut, it should be made at home.

The good news is: it’s an easy process!
All diseases begin in the gut!

Approximately 88% of our body’s immunity is found in the lining of the Gastrointestinal (GI) system. Its positioning there is primarily to stop invaders from moving out of the digestive tract into the body. Over time without the beneficial bacteria and proper balance in the gut, toxins, opportunistic bacteria, and parasites chisel away at the physical barrier wall and create leaky gut. Once there is an opening in the wall lining, pathogens escape from the GI, travel through the bloodstream, penetrate the blood brain barrier, and wreak havoc on specific function of your cells, causing any number of diseases. What causes a healthy gut to become imbalanced? Poor diet, antibiotic use, low digestive enzymes, alkalinity, acidity, chemical toxins, environmental toxins, radiation, blood sugar irregularity, stress, and pregnancy and birth inherited gut imbalances. (Taken from the “heal your gut cookbook”)

**Sauerkraut Ingredient suggestions:** (use as many or little of these as you wish)

- Cabbages (organic if available, must be VERY firm)
- Beetroot (grated)
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Carrot
- Garlic
- Kale
- Dulse flakes
- Apple (grated)
- Good Quality salt!!!
- Coriander seeds, Caraway, Cardamom Pods (seeds inside them), Fennel seeds. anything to just get that “je ne sais quoi!”
- Onion
- Really, just get creative
- Put your LOVE into it, Experiment and Have FUN!
Sauerkraut instructions:

1. Take off the outer leaves of the cabbage, cut out the middle part (the hard tough part without any layers in it).

2. Slice the cabbage as thin as possible with a serrated knife (a large bread knife works fine), you can also use a mandolin. The finer and longer strands you cut, we believe is the best texture.

3. After cutting all the cabbage, throw it in a large bowl (we use very large stainless steel bowls, I also find my slow cooker is a large enough size to mix all the ingredients together)
4. Add the rest of the ingredients to the mixing bowl, (grated beetroot, ginger, carrot, dulse flakes, spices, garlic, salt (approx 1 heaped Tbs per small cabbage) etc.) It should start to resemble a nice colourful coleslaw now!

5. Now its time to mix all the ingredients around, get your fingers in and squeeze the mixture as you mix, Its time for the salt to start drawing out the liquid from the vegetables, you can leave the mixture after a good hard squeeze and mix for around 10-20 minutes to allow more liquid to form. This is where a lot of people get stuck and think they need to add liquid. (TRUST US, you don't need to add liquid, IT WILL FORM eventually). When adding mixture to jar, more liquid will form also.
6. Start transferring the mixture to the jar, 1-2 hand fulls at a time, then start to compress the mixture to the bottom of jar using a wooden stomper/mortar or something similar, the mixture needs to be very compact in the jar for the fermenting process to work correctly.

7. After transferring all the mixture into the jar, it should be swimming in its own liquid, if not, keep compacting until liquid is over the sauerkraut, this MUST happen in order for the sauerkraut to work. Next we must grab a few clean outer leaves from the cabbage that we didn't use and bundle them tightly together to form a 'plug', this is pushed in tightly! to keep the sauerkraut pushed down, so the liquid is therefore pushed up, the 'plug' is doing the same job as a weight would do, (this step is very important to get right). Put your air lock on, clean the jar up and store on a plate in a dark cupboard or room. Now wait 3 weeks until ready, do not open the lid or disturb, there should bubbles forming within 24 hours or so, GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY FERMENTING!!!!