Definite Guide To Fermented Foods

A truly healthy nutrition regimen wouldn’t be complete without fermented foods – they are the missing link to every diet.

Whatever health goals we might have would be achieved with expedited results by learning about these miracle foods and of course, implementing them into our lives.

The thought of eating a fermented food alone might be hard to swallow if you’re not acquainted with their alchemical power. Getting to know the extraordinary benefits behind these foods is the first step toward inviting them into our lives.

What Are Fermented Foods?

What exactly are fermented foods? You most commonly know of fermented foods as yogurt, sauerkraut, beer, cheese, and wine. In a few words, they are common foods – milk, cabbage, or grains – that have undergone and alchemical process of fermentation – but more on this later.

Fermented foods have been around for thousands of years – they were the original “antibiotics”. These foods are rich in lactobacilli – beneficial bacteria – enzymes, vitamins and minerals, making them ideal foods for longevity.

These foods are favorites among the longest living people such as the Hunza, Turkish, Bulgarian and Japanese cultures. They have been known for their healing properties and pack a tangy and delicious taste.

Because of their rich Vitamin C content fermented vegetables have been used to prevent scurvy and aid the immune system since long ago. For centuries, the Chinese cultured cabbage to ensure a supply of greens in their diet year round. To say the least, these foods have been long cherished as a staple form of health insurance.

The Best Fermented Foods

Not all fermented foods are created equally. Choosing the right types of fermented foods will make all the difference in the benefits you reap. Commercial ads for yogurts for example lead us to believe is the yogurt that aids our health. Really, it’s the friendly bacteria – probiotics – that are responsible for good health.

The trouble with the majority of commercial fermented foods is that many of them have been high-heated, pasteurized and prepared in untraditional ways – creating a food that is far from optimal. They are much higher in sugar, alcohol, and because of the heating process have lost their vital essence – probiotic bacteria.
Here are a few traditional fermented foods to consider:

- Various raw cultured vegetables (sauerkraut, kimchi, any variety of vegetables)
- Raw cultured vegetable juices (beet kvass)
- Raw coconut kefir
- Raw cultured butter
- Raw goat milk kefir
- Raw Apple Cider Vinegar
- Other probiotic beverages
- Miso
- Natto

What makes a superior fermented food is the quality of ingredients and the fermentation process. The food listed above are all raw quality – meaning they are unpasteurized and unheated – containing all their nutrients, enzymes and of course, beneficial bacterial. Why you’ll see kefir on the list and not yogurt is because yogurt has to be heated, therefore, losing its enzymes.

Choosing the “best” fermented foods also starts with choosing the best ingredients. Always choose organic and local foods when possible. However, if the ingredients aren’t organic, using a proper starter culture will reduce or eliminate any pesticides or other contaminants.

These two aspects in place, what also makes an ideal fermented food comes down to the uniqueness of one’s digestive health. For example, natto and miso may aggravate yeast and viral infections and therefore are best consumed once those issues have been handled. Otherwise, they are very healing foods.

**Understanding The Fermentation Process**

As we know, not all ferments are created equally. Aside from choosing high-quality ingredients it’s important to take a look at the fermentation process when choosing the right type of fermented food.

There are two main ways to ferment a food, *wild fermentation* or *culturing*.

Wild fermentation is just that – *wild*. There is just no way of knowing what bacteria or yeast you are dealing with. This is because they are very vulnerable to accumulating and embodying whatever type of environment they grow in. If there are airborne bugs floating around they can contaminate the cultures.

This is a problem because unfortunately, many people have an overgrowth of Candida and do not yet know it. Actually roughly 90% of people have parasite or bacterial overgrowth! Playing around with wild ferments simply doesn’t make much sense, as they will only weaken an already weakened immune system.
The best way to aid a body with this type of imbalance is to support it with very specific strains of bacteria.

You may be risking the integrity of your gut when you ferment foods with the following:

- Kombucha
- Whey
- A pure salt brine

Culturing is the ideal fermentation process, which involves fermenting food using strain specific bacteria. When purchasing fermented foods or making them at home it’s best to follow these guidelines:

Use a starter culture or kefir starter that contains specific strains of beneficial bacteria and beneficial yeast. You can purchase these online and some brands of probiotic foods will list if they’ve used them or not.

Look for foods with added mineral blends. If making yourself, add a pinch of trace minerals, such as fulvic and humic acid or raw sea salt when fermenting. Probiotics “eat” minerals to flourish – they thrive in mineral-rich environments.

Kevita and Body Ecology are two sources high-quality and properly prepared probiotic rich foods. With probiotics on the rise, you may find other sources in health food stores or online. Just be sure to check these guidelines for integrity.

**The Benefits of Fermented Foods**

It would be an understatement to say the benefits of fermented foods have a definite beginning and end. The truth is, properly prepared fermented foods benefit the body as a whole, by supporting the immune system.

The immune system controls the genetic operating system, which is the “physiological fate” of our health and wellness. By supporting the immune system we are supporting every physiological function.

That being known, let us take a look at a few common attributes of good health and how the consumption of fermented foods plays a role in benefitting these biomarkers.

**Weight Control**- When the gut is wounded, it is an uphill battle to lose weight. Probiotics naturally occurring in fermented foods heal an inflamed gut, which supports natural in balancing an ideal weight. Scientists have been able to identify five ways that gut health influences weight.

First, a healthy gut will directly affect the metabolism. It is actually gut bacteria that harvest energy from the food that you eat. Depending on the type of bacteria, some harvest more energy than others.

Secondly, gut health is in direct proportion to hormonal balance. Gut bacteria regulate the release of
gut hormones. These hormones control blood sugar, encourage satiety, and reduce leaky gut. When our
ton hormones are balanced we don’t overeat, crave sugar foods, or accumulate toxic matter in the intestinal
tract.

Probiotic foods can also influence our genetics. Your genome helps shape your “inner ecosystem”. For
example, genetic mutations that affect levels of the hormone leptin are associated with more fat-
forming bacteria and less good-for-you Bifidobacteria. In simple terms, people who are “genetically
overweight” are found to have less healthy gut-flora. By increasing beneficial bacteria we can have a
positive impact on reversing this.

The fourth way probiotics affect weight is as by working as an anti-inflammatory food. When our gut
consists largely of unhealthy bacteria it becomes toxic and triggers a systemic inflammatory response.
Typically a person with obesity or metabolic syndrome shows high levels of bacterial toxins.

Lastly, probiotics maintain a strong gut lining. Intestinal inflammation – or leaky gut – drives obesity
and problems with blood sugar. Consuming probiotic foods daily can reduce “leakiness” and even
improve blood sugar. Once the gut is populated with more healthy bacteria the body naturally drops
excess weight.

To summarize, a lack of healthy gut-bacteria is often the one obstacle that stands in the way between
stubborn fat and a leaner, healthier you.

Improve Digestion- Most of us know that eating raw vegetables is a smart move in terms of
health. While raw foods are loaded with enzymes that aid in digestion, they can be difficult to digest for
someone with a weak digestive tract.

Raw fermented foods are superior to raw vegetables alone. They contain tenfold the enzymes and are
pre-digested by the lactic bacteria produced during fermentation. The friendly flora in them already
converted the natural sugars and starches in the vegetables into lactic acid – usually a job of our own
saliva and digestive enzymes.

In this way, fermented foods work as a digestive aid, providing us with an abundance of live enzymes
to aid in the break down of our foods.

They’re Anti-Aging- One of the secrets to maintaining youth is preserving our energy. We can do
this by preserving our enzymatic reserves. The only true anti-aging method to be proven is calorie
restriction. However, due to the natural addictive human tendency it’s easy to make calorie restriction
an unhealthy thing – starving ourselves is not a healthy solution. By adding in fermented foods, we
improve our metabolic efficiency. Meaning, we digest more nutrition and therefore require less food.

In simple terms, the less we eat, the more energy we have to live. Digestion takes up a lot of our energy
that could be used for generating new hair, skin, brain cells and more. When we consume fermented
food, we are preserving our energy by aiding he digestive process with an abundance of enzymes.

The more enzymes we have present in the body the more they can be used to restore the body.
Enzymes eliminate toxins, rejuvenate cells, and strengthen the immune system – all which aid in a
longer, more vibrant life.

Control Cravings- Food craving are common amongst the modern world. Food cravings are a
common symptom of digestive distress. With roughly 80% of the population struggling with digestive
issues, fermented foods could not have regained popularity at a better time.

These foods, especially fermented veggies and coconut kefir, have a sour taste that takes away the craving for something sweet. Most of the modern diet consists of two basic flavor profiles, salty and sweet, with not enough spicy, bitter, pungent or sour tastes.

Bitter and sour flavors especially – like those found in fermented foods – stimulates the vagus nerve, which tells the liver to produce bile and stomach acid. This eliminates the craving for sweets and also aids in the digestion of proteins and fats.

_**Coconut kefir**_ is especially good for eliminating _sugar cravings_ by providing pseudo sweetness – without the sugar – while simultaneously supporting the liver and kidneys.

### Are Fermented Foods For You?

Because digestive issues such are so common not everyone might do well with fermented foods off the bat. Fermented foods contain a compound called histamine. This compound is released from immune cells during an immune system attack.

Histamine is what drives the most common signs of allergies – itchy, red eyes, sneezing, runny nose, and congestion.

While our own cells, belonging to the nervous system and certain gut bacteria also make histamine – all fermented foods contain it as well. If you experience symptoms of allergies there is likely histamine intolerance.

**Signs of histamine intolerance:**

- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Asthma
- Low blood pressure
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Hives or red, itchy skin

**In this case, step one is to avoid these foods:**

- Alcoholic beverages
- Smoked or partially smoked oily fish (like tuna, sardine, mackerel, and herring)
Cured meats
Aged cheese (Parmigiano, gouda, and cheddar)
Fermented foods, including sauerkraut and young coconut kefir
Vinegar
Chocolate and vanilla
Nightshades (Spinach, tomato, and eggplant, cinnamon, chili powder, and cloves)

Eggs

Though avoiding certain foods will help eliminate a histamine reaction it will not ultimately heal the issue. Histamine is not necessarily a bad thing. The body is smart – it wouldn’t release histamine without also throwing in the enzyme that destroys it. This is the how the body achieves balance or homeostasis.

The enzyme that detoxifies histamine is called, DAO. It breaks down histamine and prevents it from accumulating in the body. DAO is released in the small intestine. A healthy small intestine has satisfactory amounts enzymes that get rid of histamine.

The theory is that anyone suffering from a histamine reaction from food lies in the inability to produce sufficient levels of DAO. There are a few factors that influence DAO activity. For example, menstruation in women, bacterial overgrowth and diet all impact the release of this enzyme.

As we mentioned earlier, a healthy small intestine is full of enzymes that break down histamine. When the small intestine is inflamed or leaky, there is less DAO and more histamine.

The good news is you can boost the levels off DOA through diet. Studies show that the soluble fiber can improve DOA production and protect against leaky gut. Therefore, before you go eating jars of sauerkraut and chugging kefir you will benefit by adding these foods to your diet first:

**Soluble Fiber Rich Foods:**

- Grain-like seeds, like quinoa, millet, amaranth, and buckwheat
- Ocean vegetables or seaweeds
- Sour fruits, like sour green apples and berries
- Green winter vegetables, like cabbage, kale, and broccoli

If you feel that you have developed histamine intolerance or are experiencing allergies, avoiding high-histamine foods could make you feel better. As we discussed it won’t heal the root of the problem. Diet, bacterial balance, the immune system (which lies largely in the gut) all work together. Restoring balance is ultimately more vital than avoiding trigger foods.

**Making Your Own: Simple Recipes**
Fermented foods are an obviously wonderful healing food. But like anything else, health too has many layers. In order to fully welcome the superpowers of fermented foods into your life consider the guidelines talked about here.

If you ultimately strive for balance, these foods can become an integral part of the picture of health. They may even very well be the missing piece to your diet!

If you’re ready to start implementing these healing foods into your diet then here are three delicious and simple recipes to do just that:

**Basic Caraway Kraut**

*Here’s what you’ll need:*

- 6 Quart-sized mason jars (for all recipes)
- 1 croc-pot or large glass bowl (for all recipes)
- 3 heads of cabbage
- 1 starter culture
- 3 tablespoons of real sea salt
- 2 tablespoon caraway seed
- 1 scoop of Ecobloom *optional but recommended

*Here’s how you make it:*

1. First, activate your starter culture by placing it in ½ cup of spring water with the 1 scoop of Ecobloom. If you’re not using Ecobloom then you can use organic rapadura sugar or sucanata to feed the bacteria and wake them up.

2. Next, chop your cabbage or run through a food processor. This depends on your desired consistency for the final product. I personally hand chop, it’s therapeutic and I can determine the size more.

3. Then, combine all ingredients in a large bowl.

4. Remove several cups of this mixture and put into a blender.

5. Add enough filtered water to make a "brine" the consistency of a thick juice. Blend well and
then add the starter culture to the brine and stir well.

6. Pack your veggie mixture down into your croc-pot or a large glass or stainless steel bowl. Pour the starter/brine over the veggies then use your fist to pack veggies tightly.

7. Let this mixture stand for about 10-20 minutes. This will draw the water out of the cabbage making an even better brine and softening the cabbage for easier packing once it comes time to fill the masons.

8. Once the cabbage has sat and softened it’s time to fill your mason jars. Fill each container almost full, but leave about 2 inches of room at the top for veggies to expand.

9. Roll up several cabbage leaves into a tight "log" and place them on top to fill the remaining 2-inch space. Seal jar with the lid.

10. Let veggies sit at about a 70 degree room temperature for at least three days. A week is even better. Refrigerate to slow down fermentation. Enjoy!

**Spicy Ginger-Carrot Kraut**

*Here’s what you’ll need:*
- 3 heads green cabbage
- 6 carrots, large
- 3 inch piece ginger, peeled and chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
- 1 starter culture
- 1 scoop Ecobloom
- 3 tablespoons real sea salt

*Here’s how you make it:*
1. Follow the same steps as the first recipe. *See above
2. Just be sure to peel away the skin and covering of the garlic and ginger. Also, add these to the brine mixture that you will be blending in steps 4 and 5. It is best to blend these herbs up very well so they distribute evenly. Otherwise, you might get a big chunk of either or, which when fermented are even stronger and will not be pleasant!

**Juniper Berry Kraut**

*Here’s what you’ll need:*
- 3 heads of purple cabbage
- 1 tablespoon juniper berries
- 1 starter culture
- 1 scoop Ecobloom
- 3 tablespoons of real sea salt

*Here’s how you make it:*
1. Follow the steps for the first recipe. *See above
DRINKS

Not everyone is a fan of cultured vegetables at first. This has a lot to do with the fact that most people just do not like vegetables. If this is the case for you, I still advocate trying them as they are so much more delicious than you are likely thinking!

However, for those on the fence about cultured veggies, there are options! One of the easiest ways to get on the fermented foods bandwagon is with Kefir. This is a bubbly, effervescent and probiotic drink that has all the healing properties of cultured vegetables, plus more!

To spare you another full book worth of information. The great benefits of Kefir is it’s ability to relax and tranquil the mind. The word kefir translates to “feel good” because of its ability to help relax the body and mind. This has much to do with its tryptophan and mineral content.

Kefir is loaded with enzymes and friendly bacteria and yeast that help balance your gut flora. It’s great for women or anyone with yeast imbalances too. More nutritious and therapeutic than yogurt – especially store-bought, which is a dead food. Kefir supplies complete protein, essential minerals, and valuable B vitamins.

Why should I drink kefir?

- Kefir is simple and inexpensive to make at home.
- Kefir tastes incredible, resemblance to soda, which makes it great for picky eaters.
- Kefir has the ability to get people off alcohol and has been known to “cure” alcoholism.
- Kefir is used to restore the inner eco-system after antibiotic therapy.
- Kefir can be made into a delicious smoothie that kids love.
- Kefir is excellent nourishment for pregnant and nursing women, the elderly, and those with compromised immunity.

Coconut Kefir Recipe

There are many ways to make coconut kefir at home. You have plenty of options; starter cultures, kefir grains, or even using a store-bought kefir as a starter. Because of the many options, I have written an entire blog about it that you can find here and learn how to make it in the way more suitable to you.

You can find the blog HERE.

Kefir Soda Recipe
Here’s what you’ll need:

· 1 quart sized mason jar
· 4 tablespoons of kefir water grains
· 4 tablespoons organic cane sugar
· 3 capsules of minerals *optional but it makes an exceptional soda and keeps your grains thriving!

Here’s how you make it:

2. First, sterilize your mason jar and anything else you use to touch the grains by flash boiling.
3. Once the jar has cooled, add your spring water. Leave about 3 inches on the top to add the grains and sugar.
4. Add in the grains, sugar and minerals. I use BodyEcology’s minerals, as they are top quality. You could also use a liquid mineral such as this. Give a good stir with a wooden spoon (stainless steel is okay, but do not use metal)
5. Place a coffee filter over the top of the jar with a rubber band to hold it in place. You want the grains to get some oxygen while fermenting. After the first 24 hours you can place a regular lid on top if you’d like.
6. Leave it out at room temp (ideally 72 degrees F.) for 24-48 hours. It depends on how active your grains are when you first get them. Kefir soda usually takes a little longer than coconut kefir, which only takes about 12-16 hours. I’ve let kefir sodas sit for as long as almost 3 days when it’s cooler.
7. When it’s finished you will see that the sugar has been eaten up, the color of the water will be darker than when started (especially if using sucanant sugar or adding the minerals). You will also be able to see visible bubbles rising. When you see this, use a nylon strainer to strain the water into a new clean jar and then add your grains back to the old one for a second go. Just repeat the steps all over again, keep in mind the grains will grow and multiple over time!
8. Last step is optional but I find it very useful. I take 2 tablespoons of dried goji berries (you can use any organic, unsulfured dried fruit however, I just like gojis because of their medicinal properties), and add it to the strained and finished kefir. Then I let that sit for another 8 hours with a lid on. This not only gives it a bit more flavor (the plain kefir is pretty dry, like a PALE ALE micro-brewed beer) it’s delicious; however, adding dried fruit gives it a slightly sweet taste, without any added sugar because the grains eat it up. The number one reason I do this is because it makes the drink VERY carbonated and I enjoy drinking it fizzy personally. You could also add herbs like ginger at this point to make a ginger-ale. I’ve experimented with all sorts of things. If you want to spice up your recipes then check out this Goji Nettle Kefir I wrote on my blog!
This is a special recipe that is out of this world good and good for you. To save some space here, you can find this recipe on my blog also by clicking HERE.

That’s all folks…

Well, there you have it! You are now officially on your way to reversing aging, deep healing, improved digestion, clear skin, a balanced mood and most importantly, a wiz in the kitchen!

It’s wonderful to learn true information about our wellness, it’s even more wonderful to learn new skills and fun hobbies that make implementing useful information. That is why I wrote this, I love the fun of making these foods daily.

There is nothing like a fun hobby to make everyday life seem a bit more magical. And how great that it’s a hobby that promotes optimal wellness, beauty and creativity?

Hopefully you’ve enjoyed this free guide to fermented foods and are excited as I am about these tasty recipes! I cannot wait for you to try them. If you have any further questions don’t forget to subscribe to my blog or shoot me an email at nick@nicksfit.com I offer one-on-one coaching for anyone looking to take their wellness to the next level of healing.

Also while you are visiting the blog, I give away another FREE present to my subscribers – a full length online course on healing the digestive system, be sure to sign of for that for even more incredible information, recipes and shopping guides. I share all my secrets to wellness within that guide!

With love,
Nick