

Should I Be Eating Fermented Foods?

By Bill Bradley, Registered Dietitian and Cookbook Author

Fermented foods have become all the rage lately, with products that were once popular returning into favor with those who are looking for healthier foods to eat. But are fermented foods really that healthy?

As more and more studies are released, the answer seems to be yes, fermented foods do seem to be beneficial to our bodies and may benefit gut health, inflammation, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, mental health and our immune system. Much of this benefit is from the probiotics created in fermented foods that can help heal the microbiome in our guts. Our microbiome is vitally important in helping us absorb nutrients and invigorating our immune system.

So, how do we get fermented foods into our diet? Here are some of the most popular fermented foods: **greek or strained yogurt, olives, beer, wine, bread, certain cheeses, cocoa, kefir, kombucha, kimchi, miso, and sauerkraut.** Although you can buy many of these foods in the supermarket, it is much more fun (and less expensive) to make them at home. My wife has been making sauerkraut for the last couple of years in our tiny kitchen. I bought a ceramic crock for her and during the summer, the smell of fermenting cabbage wafts throughout the kitchen. The end product is the best sauerkraut I have ever tasted!

Yogurt is another fermented food that is easy to make at home. Here is a [link](#) on how to make yogurt. The satisfaction of making your own is worth it, not to mention the health benefits!

An easy fermented drink to make is Kombucha, a slightly sweet, slightly vinegary, low calorie drink that can easily become addictive. You begin with a living organism called a SCOBY which produces a very flavorful drink. Making Kombucha has become very popular lately and I have had 3 friends offer me SCOBY's in the last week. Here is a [recipe](#) to make Kombucha.

If you are a little hesitant to start fermenting your own food, here is a really simple pickled vegetable [recipe](#) from Italy called Giardiniera. This doesn't take a lot of prep and comes out super delicious in 4-5 days of fermentation!

For more info on fermentation I would recommend any of the following books:

Cultured Foods for your Kitchen: 100 recipes featuring the bold flavors of fermentation by Leda Scheintaub

Wild Fermentation: The flavor, nutrition and craft of live-culture foods by Sandor Ellix Katz and Sally Fallon Morrell

The Art of Fermentation: An in-depth exploration of essential concepts and processes from around the world by Sandor Ellix Katz and Sean Crisden

