



About Alison Marsden

I had a passion for cooking as a child and in my twenties when I discovered I had food intolerances I started to cook and bake my own food. I now help people get relief from pain through rebalancing their diet and have written three books on how to cook to promote a healthy digestion and still get your comfort foods!

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About the recipe

I discovered sauerkraut whilst on a qi gong course which covered how to boost your qi energy with food. Chinese medicine does not advocate salads in the winter due to its cooling properties and so they use sauerkraut as this has a warming property on the body. I make a batch every fortnight now and it is a great convenient food to use when you have not got time to prepare a healthy meal as it stores very well.

I often think of how probiotics has taken off with food and maybe one day we will have probiotic hand wash instead of anti bacterial hand wash. After making my batch of sauerkraut I feel all the utensils and bowls are super clean from all the juice in the cabbage. Washing up liquid may one day be made out of cabbage! This is what it can do to your gut lining; cleansing and adding in some good bacteria.

Sauerkraut Recipe

Although this can be bought from health food shops and some super markets, you get different strains of bacteria when you make it yourself. Also you are reducing the packaging impact on the environment. Once you get confident you can also make your own flavours, mixing red and white cabbage produces a lovely pink colour and a slightly different taste, or add other vegetables such as carrot or onion.

Ingredients

1 large cabbage

Sea salt, about 1 teaspoon (optional)

The salt draws the water out of the cabbage and creates the brine in which it ferments and prevents cabbage from rotting. Sea salt has lots of essential minerals so please do feel *good* about the salt, and it helps the brine to come out of the cabbage. You can omit it and it will still ferment, you just need to ensure you have liquid coming out of the cabbage by mixing and pressing well.

Method:

1. Remove *outer* leaves and cut the *end* stalk off. Then grate the cabbage, including the stalked centre of the cabbage as this has much of the nutrients.
2. Mix in a big bowl, adding salt
3. Slowly add into a large sterilised jar and press down with a spoon as you go. The pressing helps create the brine. Make sure the jar is full with about 1 inch (2.5cm) space to the top for the expansion of the fermentation. If the jar is underfull the sauerkraut is at risks going off. Better to overfull rather than underfull.
4. Once the brine starts to come seal with a tight lid. Store on a plate or tray on the kitchen surface (just in case the brine overflows from the jar) away from direct sunlight and other heat sources. Press the cabbage down with a spoon twice each day for 3-5 days.
5. After two to three days it starts to ferment and you get the added benefit of the good bacteria. If the brine is oozing out of the jar take some out and push down again with a spoon to ensure there is liquid brine at the top. If it starts to dry out add some salted water.
6. After about a week it is ready to eat and the longer you leave it fermenting the more bacteria is created.
7. Store in or out of the fridge. Sauerkraut will keep for at least two months. The longer you keep it the stronger the taste and quantity of bacteria. See *New to Sauerkraut* in appendix.

Variation

If you have an intolerance to cabbage you may still be OK with it fermented provided you follow the 'New to Sauerkraut' guide below. However some people still have an intolerance to fermented cabbage or just don't like the taste, so I suggest using carrots instead. Follow the same recipe as above and you may need to finely grate the carrot to get a brine coming, experiment with your own grater or food processor to find the best texture for you.

New to Sauerkraut

If you are eating sauerkraut for the first time I would advise you to follow these guidelines. Note they are guidelines; if you are in any doubt please do contact me to talk about your individual requirements. You can email me at alison.marsden@integratinghealth.com.

Initially use white sauerkraut (people are sometimes put off with the colour of red cabbage) or use a combination of white cabbage and carrot. White cabbage also has far more liquid in it.

Level 1 - Drink the liquid only (1 teaspoon a day) at least 20 minutes *before* breakfast away from food. If you do not like the taste it can be drunk with fruit juice. Monitor your bowels, if your bowels get too loose or windy reduce the quantity.

Level 2 - If your bowels are OK with Level 1 gradually increase the quantity up to 3 teaspoons of liquid a day *before* food. Do this for three days and monitor your bowels. You may need to go back to level 1 again if your bowels are too loose or windy. If all is OK move forward to level 3.

Level 3 - Start eating 1 teaspoon of the solids per day with your normal meals. Again monitor your bowels. Reduce the quantity of sauerkraut if necessary.

Level 4 - Once you are OK with the solid part of the sauerkraut you can eat up to half a mug 3 times a day. Use it as a condiment instead of mayonnaise, tomato sauce, vinegar etc. As you use it as a condiment you may like to progress to red cabbage to add a great colour to your meal.

People bowels vary greatly. Some people can go to Level 4 after only a few days, some people stay on Level 1 for a year, and some people have it on its own as a snack between meals! Adjust according to your change of environment, time of the month if you are a woman and season.

Why do people's bowels vary so much? Your microflora is 'inherited' from your parents, via birth and the first few years of your life. Being vaginally born at home and breastfed by a mother who eats organic food, who has rarely had antibiotics and has a healthy diet will give you a good start to a healthy internal ecology. This varies dramatically from person to person as the other extreme is being born in hospital, being given antibiotics within the first few days of birth, not being breastfed and having parents who have an unhealthy diet and an obsession with cleaning with disinfectants and chemicals. Getting to know the internal 'weather' of your microflora can be a useful skill in cultivating your immune system. It can take a few years for your microflora to be replenished if it is depleted. It takes five years for a soil to be certified organic as the chemicals are cleared away and the natural soil fertility develops. Thinking long term will give you a good investment into your own health.

5 Benefits of Sauerkraut:

It is loaded with about 50 strains of good microflora (making digestion easier), cleanses your gut whilst you are eating, has lots of vitamins (including the B group), is a good source of minerals (including iron, copper, sodium, magnesium and calcium) and it has also been proven to affect your mood for the better. Try it and see what you think.

