

The History and Health Benefits of Sauerkraut

History

- Sauerkraut means “sour cabbage”
- Earliest record was 2000 BC in China – it was made with rice wine
- Originated in China – presumed to be brought to Europe by Genghis Khan
- Roman writer Cato mentions preserving cabbage and turnip with salt
- French call it “choucroute”

History

- Ships to North America often carried sauerkraut to prevent scurvy and prevent disease
- Eastern European families would make several barrels to last them through the winter
- In the 16th century the process of using salt (known, as “dry curing”) with cabbage began. This causes water to be extracted from the cabbage.
- The fermentation process involves sugars in the cabbage being converted to lactic acid (preservative)

History

- Before 1940, cookbooks routinely contained recipes for making sauerkraut
- Canned sauerkraut became the most common form with added preservatives and extra salt
- Also its pasteurized to preserve it as well
- Vitamin C is lost as is the good bacteria and enzymes

What is Lactofermentation?

- The lacto-fermentation of a combination of shredded cabbage and salt
- Salt wilts or “bruises the cabbage” pulling the liquid or water out of the cabbage to cover it.
- Salt slows the development of bad bacteria allowing the good bacteria to grow
- Good bacteria produces lactic acid which then lowers the PH and prevents bad bacteria and mold from growing permanently

Health Benefits

- Some of the strains of good bacteria found in sauerkraut *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *L. bulgaricus*, *L. plantarum*, *L. casei*, *L. pentosaceus*, *L. brevis* and *L. thermophilus*
- Some of the benefits of these strains are weight loss, help regulate cholesterol, helpful with IBS, gas, bloating and leaky gut, help with ulcers and kidney stones and can help improve lactose intolerance

Health Benefits

- Anti-microbial and anti-fungal properties



- Biopreservative for other foods
- Isothiocyanates found in cruciferous vegetables are more bioavailable in sauerkraut and provide protection from carcinogens
- Vitamin U = S-Methylmethionine – may help peptic ulcers and protect the liver
- Source of vitamin C

Vitamin C

- Vitamin C is found in all cells in the body but we do not store it
- It is important to have a source of it daily
- Vitamin C is gradually lost over time in storage crops and root vegetables like cabbage, apples, and potatoes
- Fermenting cabbage as sauerkraut maintains the vitamin C content

Sauerkraut and Cancer

- One laboratory study identified enzymes that help prevent cancer
- Compounds called isothiocyanates, found in sauerkraut, have shown the potential to be anti-cancer
- Also, enzymes aid the liver and kidneys in detoxing toxins
- Good bacteria creates an environment that inhibits carcinogens and tumour growth

Other Health Benefits

- ¼ cup to ½ cup of sauerkraut daily can help acne especially if combined with liver support and other digestive aids like Swedish Bitters
- Drinking sauerkraut juice can aid stomach acid production for those with low stomach acid and can aid digestion when eating too much
- Health benefits are best in raw, fermented cabbage although lightly cooked has also shown benefits.

Aiding Digestion

- Sauerkraut provides plenty of vitamins and minerals which help aid digestive and intestinal function
- More importantly, consuming sauerkraut with any meal will aid the digestion of the other foods in the meal
- So enjoy some sauerkraut and the benefits that come with it

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