

How to Ferment Your Own Vegetables



Fermenting vegetables is a method of food preservation that has been used for centuries. During fermentation lactic acid is produced, which gives the fermented foods their tartness and stops the growth of spoilage bacteria.

Almost any vegetable can be fermented, however, the primary vegetables fermented are cucumbers (to make pickles), cabbage (sauerkraut and Kimchi) and olives.

Fermentation helps to preserve food and has many **health benefits** including:

- Lactic acid promotes the growth of healthy flora in the intestine
- Fermentation enhances the nutrient content by producing B-vitamins and increasing the digestibility of food by breaking down the fibre in the vegetables.
- Fermented foods are filled with good bacteria (also called probiotics), which produce helpful enzymes and vitamins that can improve gut function and boost immunity.

And although it may be tempting to reach for the easy option and grab a jar of kimchi or pickles from the store, commercial varieties often contain vinegar, sugar, additives and preservatives. Some are even pasteurised at high heat, killing the good lactic acid producing bacteria. This means you miss out on the wonderful benefits of the good bacteria.

GETTING STARTED

You will need:

- Vegetables:
 - You can slice, chop, grate, shred or leave them whole. Although the way you prepare the vegetables is up to you, some vegetables are better left whole (e.g. radishes, cucumbers, and brussel sprouts) and others ferment better when cut up (chopped carrots, grated zucchini or sliced Jalapeños).
 - You can ferment one vegetable alone or feel free create a mix of your most favourite vegetables
- A mason jar (canning jar)
- 1-3 tablespoons of salt
- 2-3 cups of water

STEP-BY-STEP

- Firstly, pack the veggies into the jar tightly, leaving ~ 1.5 inches of head space.
 - You can also add herbs to your jar such as dill, oregano and parsley for added flavour
- Now stir the salt and water together until dissolved
- Next, pour the saltwater over the vegetables in the jar, leaving about 0.5-1 inch of headspace
 - You can add a vine leaf or a piece of cabbage to stop the vegetables from floating to the surface and becoming exposed to the air. This will protect against the growth of bad bacteria and stops the vegetables getting mouldy. Or you can simply add more water till vegetables are fully submerged
- Seal the jar tightly and allow to ferment in room temperature for 4-10 days
- After 4 days, it's a good idea to burp the jar (roughly twice a day) where you quickly open and close the lid to release built up gas.

- The longer the veggies ferment, the tangier they'll get. Once they taste good, move the jar to the refrigerator and store for up to 2 months.
- Aim to include the fermented vegetables you made to your everyday meals. Add to your sandwiches, salads or enjoy as a dinner entrée or side.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- <https://www.culturesforhealth.com/learn/natural-fermentation/how-to-ferment-vegetables/>
- <https://www.runningtothekitchen.com/how-to-ferment-vegetables/>
- <https://www.culturesforhealth.com/learn/natural-fermentation/how-to-prepare-vegetables-fermentation>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/sep/23/aly-fowler-pickled-vegetables>
- https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/51491/Joell_Eifert_MALS_final_project.pdf?sequence=1
- <https://www.firstforwomen.com/posts/how-to-ferment-vegetables-benefits-recipes-163462>