

Tips for Fabulous Ferments

*This post is dedicated to my local fermenting buds – **Fermenting the Lakeshore***

With the recent evidence from the [Human Microbiome Project](#) proving we are more bacterial than human, fermenting is coming back with a bang. When we home ferment, we add flavorful drinks and condiments to our meals and improve our digestion and subsequently our health (both mental and physical). A proper balance of good bacteria is imperative to weight loss and management. We can do it all for a mere fraction of what probiotics and enzymes cost in the store.

For those of you just joining the wave as well as more conditioned ferment peeps, here are a few helpful pointers for the best fermented creations...

Produce–

Raw, fresh picked, local and [organic](#) are the best bet for superb fermentation. Organic from the grocery store is my second choice. Remember that [pesticide residues](#) can inhibit the bacterial growth that is necessary for successful preservation.

Salt–

Please always use high-quality salts. The cheap white salt at the store has gone through processing using unhealthy means and is drained of its life giving minerals.

I recommend that newbies follow a recipe the first time as far as the amount of salt to use. After that, adjust down or up a slight amount to taste. The amount you use will affect not only taste but texture.

Sugar–

Recipes (i.e. kombucha) generally call for just “sugar”. Because of our compromised food supply with regard to GMO’s

and pesticide use, I prefer to stay vigilant and use organic cane sugar. Regular white sugar is from [genetically modified sugar beets](#) – bad news.

H2O –

Non-chlorinated water MUST be used; filtered water is a good choice. Remember that chlorine kills micro-organisms and thus can keep your food from fermenting. Try to wash in non-chlorinated water even if you have to run a sink full and let it sit for half an hour before rinsing your produce. I encourage people to get the water out of the reverse osmosis machines at the local co-op or grocery store. Or invest in an under the sink RO of your own.

Cutting/Chopping –

The “cook” can choose to chop, slice, grate, use a food processor or mandolin for taking the original produce and making into the size for fermenting. One exception is [beet kvass](#), where you don't want the chunks too small.



Exposure to Air –

Keep fermenting fruits and veggies submerged under the liquid in the jar to prevent mold. If growth appears, scrape it off. When I have a fermenting creation with floaties (like cardamom pods in kvass), I gently shake or stir them to discourage mold from growing.

Time –

At room temperature (70-75), ferments without whey need about one week to develop the acidity required for preservation. When whey is used, preservation takes about 2-4 days. Even after being put in the refrigerator, your creation can improve with time.

Temperature –

During the first phase of fermenting, it's best to keep your

ferments at room temperature. This phase may be a couple days if you're using whey or another starter or a week or longer for wild ferments. I check the creation to see if it tastes good, then when it does, I put it in on the top (ferments only) shelf in my refrigerator. If I had a cold cellar, I would use that. Vegetables can be stored for many months this way.

Tagging –

I strongly encourage people to place a tag on each creation when it's made stating what it is (for the family member that finds it in a couple months and thinks its gone bad) and the date of creation. This just takes the guess work out of the process. Also, because of the profound impact our intentions have on [water](#), I like to place a note that says "Love and Gratitude" on all my creations.

Placement

If you are making more than one type of ferment (i.e. like kombucha and kefir, or kefir and sauerkraut), place them in different parts of the kitchen/house so as to prevent cross contamination. I usually keep mine 10+ feet apart.

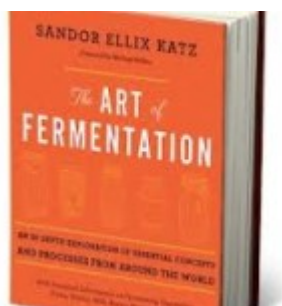
How much should I eat –

If you are new to fermenting and haven't been taking probiotics, please start out small. This means a single tablespoon of kraut or maybe a few ounces of kombucha* once or twice a day for a couple days. Let your body adjust. Ultimately you can work up to a couple tablespoons at each meal and/or 4 ounces of a fermented drink like kvass or kefir. Remember, fermented foods are meant to be condiments, not side dishes. Pay attention to how your body is responding.

And finally, a word about pH

Fermented creations have an acidic pH. Nature does that. Unless you are 1. going to go commercial or 2. just curious, you can trust Nature to be the pH it's supposed to be. There is no need to test your creation. The great thing about ferments is that they ultimately have an alkalizing effect on

the body because they make minerals more accessible to our tissues. However, they go through the mouth in their acidic form, so after you consume them, rinse out your mouth with clean water or brush your teeth (sea salt and baking soda are effective, safe and inexpensive).



Looking for a book about this return to culture? My very favorite one on the subject is *The Art of Fermentation*, by Sandor (Kraut) Katz.

Happy Fermenting! Wishing you **real food** for **real health** so you can be **real happy!**