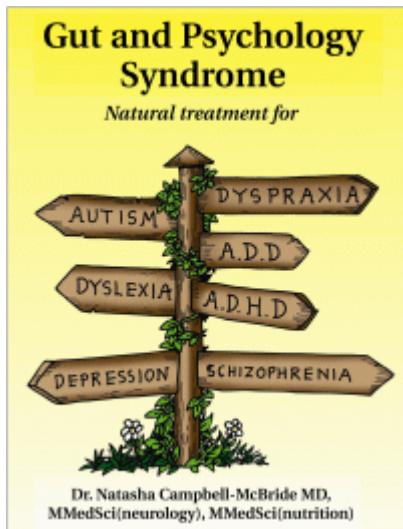


Why GAPS?

Because we **can heal**. Because medications squelch symptoms which are warning signs that something isn't working right. Because we don't have to live with IBS, colitis and Crohns, ulcers and digestive problems, joint pain and skin problems, depression and anxiety, constipation and diarrhea. We can heal and seal our guts, rebalance our [microbiome](#), and live the healthy, pain free lives we were designed to live.

Is it easy? Well, it takes planning, preparation and commitment. Is it worth it? To answer that, you must ask yourself what price you would pay to have your body feel good. The testimonials around the world of people who have successfully healed from all the issues mentioned above tell me that it IS worth it. The fact that I personally no longer have any joint pain, which my family saw as hereditary, makes it worth it for me.

So, what is GAPS? The letters stand for [Gut and Psychology Syndrome](#). The acronym and diet were created by Dr. [Natasha Campbell-McBride](#) in 2004. Dr. Natasha has helped patients around the world heal from psychological issues such as autism, ADHD, depression and anxiety, as well as from physiological (body related) problems like autoimmune conditions, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia, arthritis, headaches, PMS and all digestive disorders. Therefore, GAPS also stands for Gut and Physiology Syndrome.



The body gets nutrition to build and rebuild itself through the digestive system. Unfortunately, in the world today and especially in the United States, the standard American diet (SAD) not only cannot sustain the body, but it leads to the deterioration of it. Our lifeless processed food does not give our body what it needs to build new tissue. One of the first places to be damaged is our intestines which become permeable or otherwise known as “leaky gut”. In addition, our overabundance of sugar caramelizes in our blood vessels wreaking havoc on our brains, eyes and nerves (and elsewhere).

When we have a leaky gut, things that aren’t supposed to get into our blood stream do and these can cause issues all over the body. A major contributing factor to this is an unhealthy microbiome. I strongly encourage you to read [this article](#) to understand why our microbiomes are imperative to our health.

What do we do in GAPS? We heal and seal that leaky gut with a healthy diet including lots of meat stock, grass fed/wild meat and animal fats and probiotic rich fermented foods. As we’re healing and sealing, we’re working toward reducing the toxic load on the body. This second part is so important because, unfortunately, we live with an overabundance of chemicals that our bodies can no longer handle.

What is the end result of GAPS? A digestive system that takes

in what it needs to build healthy tissue while preventing the bad stuff from leaking through and causing dis-ease. We fix what's broken and the body works like it's supposed to.

Real food ~ it's the new medicine.

Kvass – Super Easy Wellness Tonic

Beet kvass is an amazing liquid for digestion (and so much more). And beet kvass can literally be made in less than 10 minutes, minus the time it sits on your counter fermenting. From [Nourishing Traditions](#) we learn: “One 4-ounce glass, morning and night, is an excellent blood tonic, promotes regularity, aids digestion, alkalizes the blood, cleanses the liver and is a good treatment for kidney stones and other ailments.” And unlike medicine from the store – absolutely no harmful side effects.



An Internet search of the benefits of beets will keep you reading for days. [A search in PubMed](#) points out the benefits of lowering blood pressure (among other things) as well as

[increasing exercise performance.](#)

So we have this wondrous root vegetable which we then take and lacto-ferment. The [Weston A Price Foundation](#) is a wonderful [source for information on lacto-fermented foods](#) like beet kvass.

Every group of people Dr. Price studied consumed some fermented food in their diet. Through the ages they had paid attention to what happened to their foods when trying to store them. They learned to harness the power of nature to preserve food naturally and in the process that food became more nutrient dense with enzymes and healthy bacteria.

Before the days of refrigeration and canning, food was preserved through a process called lacto-fermentation. Lactic acid is nature's best preservative – it inhibits putrefying bacteria. Starches and sugars in vegetables and fruits are converted into lactic acid by lactic-acid producing bacteria that are present on the surface of all plants and animals.

These **bacteria** synthesize nutrients that are essential to us, enable us to digest nutrients that we otherwise would not be able to digest, make nutrients bio-available to us, and work with our immune systems to protect us.

The nutritive elements in our food do us no good if our bodies cannot assimilate them. Food preparation and processing should make our foods easier to digest. Unfortunately, most food processing techniques, such as canning, preserving in sugar and chemicals, pasteurizing and irradiation, all make food much more difficult to digest. When we consistently eat foods that are difficult to digest, we compromise our vitality because the body is forced to use a great deal of energy breaking the food down. People who do take the care needed to prepare food in such a way to make it easier to digest report increased energy since the body does not have to work so hard at digestion. **Fermenting makes enzymes** – enzymes break down

our food.

More and more we see probiotics (good bacteria) and enzymes in stores and on commercials. When we ferment, we get these substances naturally.

What do you need to make kvass?

2 large or 3 medium peeled raw organic beets – chopped in chunks about 1/2 to 1" (if you cut them smaller, you'll have too much liquid)

1 tablespoon of sea salt

1/4 cup [whey](#) – must not be powdered

A 2 quart canning jar

Clean filtered water

Here is all you do: Put the beets, whey and salt in the jar and fill it to about an inch from the top with filtered water. Stir well and cover with a cloth and rubber band (to keep out fruit flies). That was easy. Now leave the jar at room temperature for 48-96 hours then put it in the frig. You're done.

I have found that I personally like to do about 3 days when my house is around 70 degrees. In Nourishing Traditions, Sally says that once you've consumed most of your first batch, you can refill the container with filtered water, set it back on the counter for 2 days and have another slightly less strong batch. After that, your beets are pretty well spent, so just throw them in the compost pile and start over again.

Over the years, I've learned to add water to the jar each time (or every other time) to refill it, put it back in the frig and just keep doing that until it tastes weaker than you like. I've found I get a lot more use out of my beets when I do that.

I like to keep at least 2 batches "brewing" in the frig. Just like kombucha, the kvass continues to ferment at cool temperatures, but much more slowly than on the counter. I

think it tastes best when it's been in the refrigerator for 3+ weeks.

To me, beet kvass is the simplest way to add the benefits of lacto-fermentation to our daily routine. Sauerkraut is also incredibly easy, it just takes a bit more time to prepare the cabbage.

Hopefully this will motivate you to give kvass a try. One more way for you to have **real food** for **real health** so you can be **real happy**. Remember that **real food** is the new medicine (actually, it's always been).

Kombucha for Beginners



Simple Kombucha Instructions – makes about $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon

1. Bring about 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups pure water to boil
2. Pour into glass vessel and add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar (or you can do this in the pot). Stir to dissolve.
3. Put in 4 tea bags and let steep (if fruit flies are around, cover with a clean towel)
4. When *completely* cool, add **scoby** (SYMBIOTIC COLONY OF BACTERIA & YEAST) and 1 cup starter tea

5. Cover with cloth and rubber band and set out of the way (70-75 degrees is nice) for 7-10 days. Label with date. I like to put "Love and Gratitude" on the label to, with lots of positive intentions.

<i>Vessel size</i>	<i>Water Amount</i>	<i>Sugar Amount</i>
<i>Tea Amount</i>	<i>Starter Tea</i>	
Quart cup	2.5 cups 2 tea bags	.25 .5 cup
Gallon cup	13 cups 8 tea bags	1 2 cups

Tips –



- Use only organic tea bags, with no staples in them. NO METAL – SCOBYS NO LIKE. Green tea has less caffeine and scobys really like black tea. Buying boxes of 100 is very economical. YES, you can use loose tea...in a dye free muslin bag is great.
- Sugar – must be organic from sugar cane (may say dehydrated sugar cane juice). Costco is the best price I've seen (\$8.99 for 10 pounds).
- Non-chlorinated water is a MUST; filtered water is best. Big grocery stores like Meijer have reverse osmosis machines where you can fill your non-BPA plastic jugs for less than 50 cents.
- Kombucha scobys multiply with every batch – it's a good idea to separate them each time and put the extras in a jar with some starter tea...a scoby "motel" if you will. Then you can share!
- Your brewing kombucha likes temps around 70 and 80

degrees. Cooler...won't grow as fast, and warmer...well, don't do warmer if you can help it.

- While brewing, your scoby may float or sink or grow weird stringy things. It's all good.

Flavoring Your Booch (p.s. ~ you don't HAVE to flavor it)



Chocolate mint
sprigs – my
favorite!

- Once your kombucha is brewed the way you like it (usually 7-10 days) (you can stick a straw in it while it's brewing, put your finger over it, pull it out and taste it), pour it into a glass measuring cup or pitcher (this makes it easier to pour into bottles). You can store it in any size GLASS vessel.
- Place flavoring (i.e. mint, ginger, blueberries, grapes, other pieces of fruit) in the bottom of the bottles.
- Pour in the kombucha and put lids on your vessels.
- Place the vessels in the cupboard for another 2-10 days – the longer the bubblier. Then put in frig.
- OR YOU CAN JUST ADD SOME ORGANIC JUICE AT THE TIME YOU CONSUME PLAIN KOMBUCHA

Great websites for “booch”ers ~

kombuchakamp.com

culturesforhealth.com

oregonkombucha.com

This post is dedicated to all the new “boochers” from my [WLACE](#) classes, [Nourishing the Lakeshore](#), [Fermenting the Lakeshore](#),

[Moondrop Herbals](#) and my most recent detox group.

As always, wishing you REAL food, for REAL health, so you can be REAL happy.

Why are we fat?

This post is dedicated to that amazing group from Unity of Muskegon who meet for Let's Talk Wellness and are making positive changes toward better health every day. I am SO proud of you all!

Last year as I ended our second year of monthly meetings at Unity on wellness, I asked what people wanted to discuss in the 2014. The topic of interest most requested was the title of this article. Yes, we already understand that being as active as possible reduces our fat reserves, so I didn't focus on exercise. Everyone knows...get up and move! But if we don't address the misinformation out there, we don't stand a chance at weight loss and management.

Since I do not teach about short term fixes at the expense of the body's health, we must address lifestyle changes, dispelling the myths we've been told the last 3 decades, to build vital cells, tissues and bodies. The focus must be on sharing the [truth](#) about the need for healthy fats and nutrient dense foods and how the low-fat/high whole grain/"sugarfree" additive recommendations have led us to the obesity fiasco we are in now.

Below is my evidence based summary of why we are larger (and much less healthy) than we should be:

- Eating [BAD fats](#) (polyunsaturated, liquid vegetable oils, margarine, oils from [GMO crops](#) {soy, cottonseed, canola, corn}, fatty meat/poultry from conventionally raised animals {complete with antibiotics, growth hormones, GMO fed, pesticide residue, no to very little sunlight}).



My family's favorite fat

- Not eating enough [good fats](#) (coconut, extra virgin olive oil, grass-fed meat and poultry, wild caught fish, avocado, cod liver oil). Low-fat foods lead to obesity because we substitute with...
- Sugar and empty carb consumption (anything made with a fine powder like flour, like baked goods, candy, chips, pastas). These carbs are digested quickly and stimulate the [hormone insulin](#), which, among other things stores fat in fat cells. [High fructose corn syrup](#). [Diet sodas](#).
- Eating processed and [non-organic foods](#) (and using [chemicals on our bodies](#), in our homes and on our yards). These foods often have [pesticide residues](#) which keep our body from taking in the minerals we need to make our metabolism work correctly. Our bodies need nutrients to function and be the "right" weight for our structure. These empty foods lead to...
- Overeating – which we do WHEN WE ARE NOT EATING NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS! Our body keeps saying, "where are the nutrients?" and then "eat more and you might find some." We can also get into the habit of over eating because of emotional issues, but again, it is often, if not always, nutrient deprived foods. We

seldom eat too much when the food is REAL and nutrient rich.

- An unhealthy [microbiome](#). Our balance of good micro-organisms in our body plays a significant role in our health and weight.
- When we have an underactive thyroid, we have a very difficult time trying to shed pounds. Be aware that water with chlorine and [fluoride](#) is thyroid disruptive. Drinking the cleanest water possible is a must. Also, good quality [coconut oil](#) supports the thyroid and is energy boosting.

What to do? The same thing I teach for other physical/emotional issues...

- Eat good fats at every meal
- Eat protein from clean (organic, grass fed, preferably local) sources at every meal – we need protein to make the happy chemicals in our brain
- Eat plenty of colorful, local (for more vitamin content), organic (for more mineral content) vegetables WITH LOTS OF BUTTER (or ghee)!
- Take good quality coconut oil – even at every meal.
- Take a high quality probiotic and/or fermented foods and drink.
- Eat organic fruits as desserts (“cave people” ate them in the fall to fatten up for the winter)
- If you feel the need for baked goods, make them out of nut flour (organic preferably).
- Don’t starve yourself. This will mess up your hormones. EAT! Just eat the real foods described above.

Until next time...wishing you **real food** for **real health** so you can be **real happy**.

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

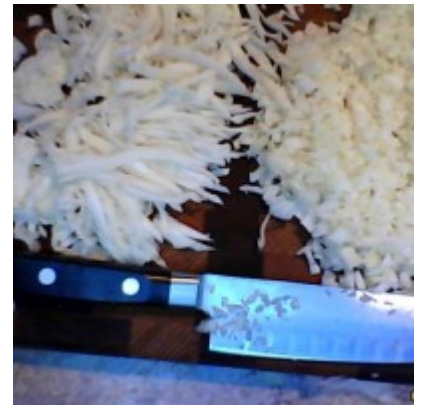
and pesticide use, I prefer to stay vigilant and use organic cane sugar. Regular white sugar is from [genetically modified sugar beets](#) – bad news.

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.

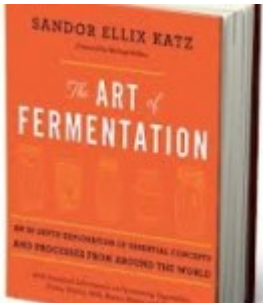
How much should I eat –

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!**

My hometown is waking up...to the microbiome

This post is dedicated to the new fermenters along the lakeshore of beautiful West Michigan. Great job to the students from my [White Lake Area Community Education](#) classes, [Nourishing the Lakeshore](#), [Fermenting the Lakeshore](#) held at [Unity of Muskegon](#) and health conscious shoppers at [Sweetwater Local Organic Foods Market](#).



What is the [microbiome](#)? Very simply, it refers to the fact that 99% of the DNA in our bodies is not our own; it belongs to micro-organisms. And if you're eating nutrient dense foods, little to no sugar and fermented foods everyday, you'll have "good" microbes that will treat you, their host, to health and wellness. Fast foods, lots of sugar and processed carbs feed pathogenic "bad" microbes and WILL lead to illness as well as extra pounds.

A little history...In the 1990's, [the Human Genome Project](#), the biggest project ever undertaken in biology, focused on decoding human genetic information ([Holt, 2008](#)). There was hope to find the genetic cause and cure for every disease that affects humanity. What was discovered by 2003 was that every animal species shares the majority of genes, but that the expression of the genes can come in a multitude of ways depending on something called the epigenome. The epigenome is influenced by what we are exposed to in our lifestyle. While the genome can be likened to the hardware in a computer, the [epigenome](#) is similar to the software, which tells the hardware what to do. But there turned out to be another missing link.

Ultimately, by 2008, the Human [Microbiome](#) Project began where we realized that part of the reason a stalk of corn has more genes (32,000) than a human (25-30,000) is the fact that we are hosts to an estimated 100 trillion bacteria. These bacteria work in concert with our genes to run our bodies.

NPR has an animated yet thorough introduction to this new knowledge. It is about 5 minutes long and I strongly encourage you watch it:

This research is in its very early stages. Yet if we look at the research of civilizations that did not live like we do, [traditional peoples](#) (like those found by [Dr. Weston A Price](#)), we see EVERY one of these healthy groups ate fermented foods. And they ate no processed foods whatsoever. When we learn to ferment and return to traditional eating, we, too, can experience the radiant health that is our birthright.

Today, our microbiomes are compromised all sorts of ways. Besides the losses during infancy addressed in the video above, our balance of good to “pathogenic” bacteria shifts with antibiotic use, toxins in our air, water and food, long term use of prescriptions and birth control pills as well as radiation. Without these beneficial “little critters” as I like to call them, we can’t digest and absorb nutrients to build healthy cells and this leads to nutritional deficiencies.

When we have an abundance of bad bacteria from eating processed food and drinking sodas, the “food” we eat gets broken down into toxic compounds which get absorbed into the bloodstream. From there they go to wherever we have a vulnerable area like our joints (i.e. arthritis), brain (i.e. fog, ADHD), skin (i.e. eczema, rash, acne) and our vital organs like our heart. These same bad little guys can damage the lining of our intestine and cause it to become inflamed and permeable (leaky gut), which leads to food intolerances and allergies. When this happens, we no longer are getting nutrients to build us up but instead get toxins that make us sick. And because 85% of our immune system is in our gut microbiome, if we don’t have good gut flora, our immune system goes haywire. No wonder so many people are unwell and overweight.

When people return to traditional ways, including fermenting, eating organic produce, consuming grass fed and wild animals and cutting out processed “foods”, their microbiomes can heal and do the work necessary to help return to wellness. For

many, supplementing with probiotics is a sensible choice while they transition to more traditional ways. If this is something you choose to do, please make sure the product you use has integrity.



Lexi Larabee
Photography

Wishing you **real** food for **real** health so you can be **real** happy.