

Fermented Vegetables 101: Getting Started at Home



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Why Ferment Vegetables?

Fermenting vegetables is one of the most powerful (and ancient) ways to support your gut health and immune system.

Lacto-fermentation uses naturally occurring beneficial bacteria—primarily species of *Lactobacillus*, *Leuconostoc*, and *Pediococcus*—to preserve food, enhance nutrient bioavailability, and enrich the final product with compounds that support digestion, reduce inflammation, and strengthen the gut lining.

Although the microbes found in fermented vegetables are typically transient, meaning they pass through the digestive tract rather than permanently colonize it, their presence still influences the gut environment in meaningful ways. These beneficial bacteria help crowd out harmful microbes, modulate immune responses, and support the health of your intestinal barrier—even after just brief exposure.

These vegetables are tangy, crisp, and alive—an everyday way to nourish your inner ecosystem.



The Art of Preparation: Tools, Jars, and Salt Ratios

Basic Equipment You'll Need:

- 1 quart-size wide-mouth **glass mason jar** (or any size jar)
- 1 **fermentation weight** or folded cabbage leaf
- 1 **lid** (regular, latch-top, or airlock)
- 1 **cutting board + knife** or grater
- 1 **mixing bowl**
- Optional: **Wooden kraut pounder** for sauerkraut

Brine Ratio (For Most Vegetable Ferments):

- 2 cups filtered water
- 1 to 1½ tablespoons fine sea salt

Important Tips:

- Use a **quart, half-gallon, or gallon jar**—just scale the brine using the same ratio: **1 to 1½ tablespoons salt per 2 cups filtered water**.
- Always use **filtered water** to avoid chlorine, which can inhibit fermentation. Choose **unrefined, additive-free salt** like Redmond Real Salt, sea salt, or pink Himalayan salt.



Basic Guide to Brine-Fermenting Vegetables

How to Make Fermented Vegetables:

1. **Dissolve salt** in water using warm filtered water.
2. **Chop vegetables** (3 to 4 cups total per quart).
3. **Add flavorings** to the bottom of the jar (garlic, ginger, dill, peppercorns).
4. **Pack vegetables tightly**, leaving 1 inch at the top.
5. **Pour in brine** and press everything down with a weight or cabbage leaf, making sure the brine rises above the veggies.
6. **Cover with a lid (or airlock lid) and ferment** at room temp (65–75°F) for 5 to 10 days.
7. **Taste and refrigerate** when tangy to your liking. Store for months.

Note on Sauerkraut:

Sauerkraut uses a different method: Salt is massaged into shredded cabbage until juices release—no water added.

Want to make kraut? Try the following recipe using a wooden kraut pounder for best results.



Recipe: Beet Sauerkraut ("Purple Kraut")



Ingredients:

- 1 head red cabbage (8 cups, shredded)
- 1 medium beet, peeled and shredded
- 2 large carrots, shredded
- 1½ tablespoons sea salt
- 1 cabbage leaf (to cover)

Instructions:

1. Shred all vegetables and place in a large bowl.
2. Sprinkle with salt and massage or pound (10 minutes) until juices release.
3. A wooden kraut pounder makes this process much easier and faster.
4. Pack mixture into a clean quart jar, pressing out air.
5. Leave 2 inches of space and top with the cabbage leaf.
6. Loosely seal and place in a bowl to catch overflow.
7. Ferment 5 to 10 days, then remove the leaf and refrigerate. Lasts up to 6 months.



Recipe: Lacto-Fermented Carrots



Ingredients:

- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 tsp whole black peppercorns
- ½ cup fresh dill
- 4 large carrots, diced
- 2 cups filtered water
- 1 to 1½ tablespoons sea salt
- 1 cabbage leaf

Instructions:

1. Add garlic and peppercorns to the bottom of your jar.
2. Layer dill, then carrots—packing tightly.
3. Dissolve salt in water, and then pour brine over veggies.
4. Press in the cabbage leaf to keep submerged.
5. Cover with a lid (or airlock lid) and ferment 5 to 10 days, burping daily after day 2.
6. Refrigerate once tangy.



Tips for Lacto-Fermenting Vegetables

Ready to start fermenting at home? Here are some time-tested tips to help you create successful, vibrant ferments:

- Always use the freshest **organic** vegetables you can find.
- Only wash vegetables if visibly dirty—beneficial bacteria live on the surface!
- Avoid visible mold—fermentation should be anaerobic. Use jars with tight-fitting lids, or invest in an airlock system or ceramic crock for more advanced fermenting.
- “Burp” jars daily (starting around day 2) to release excess gas and prevent overflow.
- Top off with brine if needed: Mix 1½ teaspoons sea salt per 1 cup filtered water.

More Tips for Success:

- **Keep everything submerged** to prevent mold.
- Use **filtered water** only—chlorine inhibits fermentation.
- Label each jar with the **date** and recipe.
- A wooden kraut pounder is essential for making sauerkraut.



The Power of Daily Nourishment

Just a few spoonfuls of fermented vegetables a day can support:

- Digestion and nutrient absorption
- Gut lining and immune strength
- Mood, energy, and mental clarity
- Microbial diversity and resilience

Healing can be a simple act of daily nourishment.

A jar of vegetables.
Your hands at work.
One bite at a time.

Ready for More?

Explore the full collection of fermented vegetable recipes and gut-healing meal plans inside the Nourishing Meals® member portal.

Visit **[NourishingMeals.com](https://nourishingmeals.com)** and log in or become a member to get started.



My First Ferment Notes:

Use this page to document your fermentation process and results. Print it for each new recipe you try!

Recipe name: _____

Date started: _____

Jar size used: _____

Salt ratio / brine details: _____

Vegetables used: _____

Flavorings added (herbs, spices): _____

Fermentation duration: _____ **days**

Ambient temperature: _____

Daily observations: _____

Taste notes: _____

Next time I'll try: _____



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