

FERMENTED FOODS AND GUT HEALTH

The human digestive tract—or gut—contains trillions of microorganisms known as gut microbiota. In fact, the average person’s gut contains at least 1000 different bacteria species. Each person’s microbiota is unique, similar to a fingerprint. Many of these bacteria are beneficial in maintaining our health by:

- **Aiding digestion and the absorption of nutrients**
- **Synthesizing vitamins and anti-inflammatory molecules**
- **Supporting the immune system**
- **Preventing growth of harmful microbes**

Fermentation is a type of food preservation dating back to the beginning of human civilization. When foods are fermented, they provide health-promoting bacteria, which are similar to those living in our gut. Common examples of fermented foods are:

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| • Yogurt | • Sour cream |
| • Kefir | • Fermented vegetables |
| • Sauerkraut | • Miso |
| • Kimchi | • Raw apple cider vinegar |
| • Kombucha | |
| • Buttermilk | |



High heat and pasteurization destroy beneficial bacteria, so not all fermented foods contain them in the finished product. Look for the words **“live active cultures”** on the label.

And don’t forget prebiotics. They are food for the beneficial bacteria in our gut. They consist of certain types of fiber that can promote the growth and activity of our healthy bacteria. Common sources of prebiotics are:

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| • Artichokes | • Barley | • Lentils |
| • Asparagus | • Garlic | • Onions |
| • Bananas | • Leeks | • Wheat |

So take care of your gut and introduce more fermented foods onto your plate!



GOT MILK? MAKE YOGURT

Adding lactic-acid-producing micro-organisms to milk results in a rise in milk acidity, which makes yogurt. Making your own yogurt means you get to control the type of milk and keep out added sugar.

- 1 Slowly heat a half gallon of organic whole milk to 180 degrees (when bubbles form but just before boiling). This process kills any bacteria that might inhibit fermentation. Keep stirring to prevent burning or a skin from forming on the surface.
- 2 Cool the milk to 110 degrees. At this temperature, the yogurt culture will thrive, so whisk in 1/4 cup of recently purchased plain organic yogurt with live cultures. If you make yogurt again within two weeks, you can use your own yogurt as your starter.
- 3 Pour the mixture into five clean pint mason jars. Fill a sixth jar with hot tap water. Put all the jars into an insulated cooler—or anywhere the temperature will be somewhat constant and the jars not jostled—for 5 to 8 hours. Then refrigerate your yogurt.