

How to Make Homemade Sauerkraut In a Mason Jar



What are the Ingredients?

CABBAGE & SALT



No, really! That's it!

"What is fermentation, anyway?"

Sauerkraut is made by **lacto-fermentation**. There is *beneficial bacteria* present on the surface of the cabbage (and also on *all* fruits and vegetables). "*Lactobacillus*" is one of those bacteria, and is the same beneficial bacteria found in yogurt! Once submerged in brine, the bacteria convert sugars in the cabbage into lactic acid, a natural preservative that inhibits the growth of bad bacteria.

Lacto-fermentation has been used for centuries to preserve seasonal vegetables beyond their normal shelf life. The process is very reliable and safe. Fermented sauerkraut can be kept at cellar temperature (around 55°F) for months, although most of us just store the kraut in the fridge. The fermentation process transforms the cabbage into an incredibly tasty kraut, and has the health benefit of containing much of the same healthy probiotics as a *whole bowl* of yogurt!

Why start with Sauerkraut?

Sauerkraut is often the first fermentation project recommended to first time fermenters. It's easy to make, requires very little special equipment, and is dependably delicious. All you do is shred the cabbage, add salt, knead it and pack it into a container. The cabbage releases liquid, creating its own brine. Submerged in this liquid for a period of several days or weeks, the cabbage slowly ferments into the crunchy, sour condiment we know and love as sauerkraut.

How long does it take to make the Sauerkraut?

The minimum is about 3 days, though the kraut will continue to ferment and gets tastier for many days after that. Just keep tasting it and refrigerate (or take it to a cool cellar), until it tastes good *to you*. Sauerkraut is safe to eat at every stage of the process, so there is no real minimum or maximum fermentation time.

**Yes! You can make your very own
HOMEMADE SAURKRAUT!**



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What Tools do I Need?

Cutting board, chef's knife, wide mouth mason jars (either 1 two quart jar, 2 one quart jars, or 4 pint jars), a large mixing bowl, weights, jar caps (*cloths or coffee filters and rubber bands or twine to secure the them, or wide mouth fermentation lids and jar bands*), and (optionally) a canning funnel.

What Can Go Wrong? ...Not much.

You will probably see bubbles form. These are normal and caused by CO2 being released into the brine during the fermentation process. But if the CO2 can't escape, it could cause the kraut to float above the brine or cause the precious brine to overflow. This is why our preferred method is to cap the jars with a clean cloth or use a fermentation lid, both of those techniques allow built up CO2 to escape naturally. If you use an airtight seal, you will need to "burp" the kraut at least once a day.

You may see foam, or white scum on the surface of the sauerkraut, but these are all signs of normal, healthy fermentation. Just skim off the white scum as you see it or before refrigerating the sauerkraut. If you get a very active fermentation or your mason jar is very full, the brine can sometimes bubble up over the top of the jar. So we recommend using a larger mason jar than is really necessary to hold the cabbage or place a plate below the jar to catch the drips. Make sure the cabbage continues to be covered by the brine.

If you find mold growing on the surface of the sauerkraut, don't panic! Mold usually forms when the cabbage isn't fully submerged or if it's too hot in your kitchen. The sauerkraut is still fine (it's still preserved by the lactic acid) so just scoop off the mold and proceed with fermentation.

All this said, it's still important to use your best judgement when fermenting. If something smells or tastes moldy or unappetizing, *trust your senses and toss it.*

What's the Difference between Homemade Kraut and Store Bought Kraut?

Only... TASTE AND FLAVOR! Homemade kraut is fresher, crispier, crunchier, more colorful, is 100% organic with no other additives (other than any seasonings you might include), and... it is *way less expensive*. What's not to love?

Ways with Weights

Most people simply use smaller glass jars filled with marbles, stones, or water. Some people use a plastic bag filled with water (not our favorite technique due to a potential leak into the brine). Special fermentation weights are also available, we like the heavy glass ones with a handle sunken into the weight. One thing we recommend is use a cabbage leaf on top of the kraut and under the weight, this helps keep the kraut from floating up over the brine.

Ideas for Flavoring

There are so many ways to customize your sauerkraut with creative flavoring or added color. Add some shaved or slivered carrot, apple, celery root, garlic or onion! Try one or more of these seasonings: dill seed, caraway seed, oregano or red pepper flakes! Try adding combinations of two or more of any of the above!

Safety First!

Wash, clean and thoroughly rinse *everything* (cutting board and knife included!) before you start. And *wash your hands!* Make sure there is no soap residue on anything. We sterilize our jars and weights in boiling water for 10 minutes, though the majority of instructions available rarely call for this.



Home Made Sauerkraut Recipe Instructions

1. Slice cabbage into quarters and trim out the core. Slice quarters in half lengthwise for 8 wedges. Thinly slice wedges cross wise into thin ribbons.
2. In a large mixing bowl toss the cabbage and 1-1/2 tablespoon of salt. Recommended salts are kosher salt and sea salt, but pickling salt is also good. If you want it more salty, add up to another tablespoon. Salt that contains iodine (table salt) *should not be used*, it slows down the fermentation process considerably.
3. Work the salt into the cabbage with your hands by massaging it and squeezing it until the cabbage becomes very watery and limp. This takes about 5 or 10 minutes to do. If you want to add flavoring(s) to your kraut, mix it in now.
4. Pack the cabbage into the jar(s) (a funnel makes this easier to do). While filling the jar(s), press down on the cabbage with your fist or a weight. Leave enough space at the top of the jar for the weights. Pour any liquid that is left in the mixing bowl back into the jar(s).
5. If you're going to use a cabbage leaf between the weight and the kraut, do it now. Place your weights on top of the cabbage.
6. Cover the jar. We use the cloth method mostly. When using a fermentation lid, store the jars on a plate as we found that sometimes when the CO2 builds up enough pressure to burp, it also spits out some brine sometimes, which runs down the outside of the jar. If you use an airtight seal, you *must burp the kraut at least once a day* or the CO2 pressure could break the jar or seal.
7. Over the next 24 hours, press down on the kraut every so often to help release the brine. If after 24 hours there is not enough brine to cover the kraut, dissolve 1 teaspoon of recommended salt in 1 cup of water and add enough water to submerge the kraut.
8. Ferment the cabbage for 3-10 days away from direct sunlight and in a cool place (65F to 75f is ideal). Start tasting after 3 days, and when it tastes good to you, remove the weight, screw on a regular Mason jar lid. Your Homemade Kraut will keep for at least 2 months, longer if refrigerated.