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All About Fermented Foods

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If you have read a health magazine recently, you have probably heard about the latest trend in nutrition - fermented foods. But what exactly are fermented foods and why are they so popular right now?

Fermented foods contain tiny living bacteria known as probiotics. Don't worry, these are not the same bacteria that spoil your food and make you sick. Quite the opposite, probiotics are bacteria that are extremely good for your gut health. Your body naturally has bacteria living in the gut (about 500 trillion!). Some of the bacteria are good, such as probiotics, and some are bad that come from processed foods, chemicals, toxins in the air, and more. Probiotics work to increase the amount of good bacteria that aid in keeping

the body healthy while ridding the body of the bad bacteria that makes you sick and contributes to diseases.

The "gut" aka digestive tract is linked to many of the processes that occur in the body. When the gut isn't functioning properly, problems occur such as digestive issues, inflammation, and various diseases. Inflammation has been linked to conditions such as cancer, arthritis, and high cholesterol to name a few, so it is important to control inflammation in the body. Consuming probiotic rich fermented foods allows the gut to work optimally, regulating bowel movements, keeping inflammation at bay, improving the immune system, and has even been linked to improving mental health.



As probiotics are living cultures, they too, like humans, need food to survive. Enter prebiotics, non-living, non-digestible carbohydrate compounds found in food that probiotics consume. Without

prebiotics, probiotics would not be able to live and provide your gut and body with all their health benefits. Prebiotics can be found in foods such as garlic, artichokes, dandelion greens, onions, and more.

There are a wide variety of fermented foods you can consume. Adding these foods to your diet not only aids in overall health and digestion, but add a unique yet pleasant aspect to your diet. Some popular fermented foods are as follows:

- Sauerkraut: cabbage that has been fermented and salted.
- Kimchi: similar to sauerkraut, kimchi is a spicy fermented cabbage found in Korean cuisine.
- Tempeh: soybeans that have been naturally fermented and serve as a good vegetarian protein source.
- Kombucha: typically either black or green tea with probiotics added to it and sold in a variety of flavors. (Note: kombucha contains slight traces of alcohol that varies by brand and brew)
- Yogurt: look for varieties made and labeled as containing live

and active cultures. Yogurt is an excellent source of calcium.

- Kefir: a fermented milk similar to yogurt and is rich in calcium.
- Miso: a type of vegetarian paste typically made from beans or grains. Miso adds a strong, salty, umami flavor to many dishes.

References

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