

Sauerkraut Benefits

Growing up, sauerkraut came out of a can and was used solely as a hot dog topping. During my childhood, it was a sign of true bravery if you could eat it. Fast-forward to today, and you will find sauerkraut at our house coming out of jars or crocks — and we not only use it as a condiment, but we also eat it plain ... and with enjoyment. By the age of 2, both my girls enjoyed a small serving of plain, lacto-fermented sauerkraut!

We are sauerkraut fans for its culinary value, but our sauerkraut days started when we found out about some of the benefits. If you make or buy sauerkraut that is raw and lacto-fermented instead of the typical vinegar versions, you get many benefits. Here are a few of them.

Sauerkraut is a probiotic food

The lactic acid process that naturally preserves sauerkraut is ripe with probiotic power. To name just a few of the good bacteria that are common to lactic acid preserved food, there is *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *L. bulgaricus*, *L. plantarum*, *L. caret*, *L. pentoaceticus*, *L. brevis* and *L. thermophiles*. There is a wide range of healthy bacteria responsible for these beautiful ferments, so you won't find the same good bacteria count in every batch, but what you will find is a product brimming with healthy probiotics that will help ensure good gut health. Because of antibiotic use, and even the chlorine in our water, the healthy bacteria in our systems are often beaten down. Including naturally fermented foods such as sauerkraut is an excellent way to rebuild healthy gut bacteria levels.

Sauerkraut is a good source of vitamin C

Historically sauerkraut was taken on long voyages to ensure that the crew didn't get scurvy - a terrible disease caused by a vitamin C deficiency. It worked because sauerkraut is a good source of natural vitamin C. I like to get most of my vitamin needs from food, and a modest serving of sauerkraut every day is a step in the right direction.

Sauerkraut has cancer-fighting properties

Most of us know that broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower are excellent foods for helping prevent cancer. Sauerkraut is an excellent way to enjoy cabbage. But an interesting Finnish study found that beyond the normal benefits of cabbage, sauerkraut has even more cancer-fighting powers. It was found that through the fermentation process, isothiocyanates were produced that were found to prohibit the growth of cancer. Glucosinolates in sauerkraut were also found to help activate the body's natural antioxidant enzymes, and the flavonoids in it are helpful for protecting artery walls from oxidative damage. The study concluded that sauerkraut is an even better choice than raw cabbage for cancer-fighting properties.

Sauerkraut is a traditional ulcer treatment

I've read that some European countries have traditionally treated peptic ulcers with sauerkraut. It turns out that cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin U, which can help heal peptic ulcers. Raw cabbage juice was shown to be an effective treatment for peptic ulcers, and raw sauerkraut is another way to get your vitamin U. Perhaps a serving of sauerkraut could help keep peptic ulcers away!