

An Unusual Culinary Column: Fermenting For Your Gut Health

By Karen Kain

Just as the weather started to turn cold, I was invited to make a very large batch of sauerkraut with my friend Kert and some other friends. We were all bundled up in warm clothes working on the front porch shredding and mashing cabbage with bits flying everywhere. We had a blast. To keep the day in theme, Kert gave me a mother SCOBY, so I could make my own Kombucha. (A SCOBY is a Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast.) He also shared his sauerkraut and Kombucha recipes with me to share with you. After the sauerkraut was made, we started up the BBQ and cooked up some sausages which were served with a plate of fried sauerkraut and chopped apples. A great time was had playing with food, literally up to my elbows.

Making sauerkraut is an annual tradition for Kert. Every year he orders cabbages from a pumpkin patch in Portland. He had 11 cabbages, weighing about 12 pounds each. This will give him enough sauerkraut to last the year through.

If you are living with someone who has Autism, you probably already know all about the health benefits of eating fermented foods. There is a very critical gut to brain connection that exists in overall health and wellbeing. Most children who have Autism also have severe gut issues. As we get older, we tend to have more digestion problems and adding fermented foods to your diet will

help. Fermented foods have also been known to help people living with diabetes. If you have digestive problems, it is almost impossible to eliminate them unless you work on getting the gut healthy. One of the best natural ways to do so is to eat fermented foods rich in lactic acid producing bacteria. Lactic acid-producing bacteria is what makes vegetables ferment. You can take probiotic supplements or do it the natural way and eat a tablespoon or two a day of fermented foods. Adding fermented foods to your diet helps to balance the production of stomach acid and ease digestive discomfort. The great thing is that you only need about a tablespoon once or twice a day.

For thousands of years medicine has relied on fermented foods. Because we have changed our diet, eliminating naturally fermented traditional foods like sauerkraut and buttermilk, our gut has suffered. It is only recently that the gut-brain health connection has been revisited. I have many friends in the Autism community who are chopping cabbage and making fermentation a part of their daily diet. The word Autism and recovery go hand in hand with a gluten free diet and fermented foods. My dear friend LJ has her son drink the liquid from her homemade sauerkraut to help him when he has had a bad day or eaten gluten. Fermented foods, or as some call it "real" foods like sauerkraut, plain yogurt, Kombucha, and strong aged cheese are certainly making a comeback.

You might wonder why fer-

mented foods are so good for you. These foods that have gone through a process of lacto fermentation where the natural bacteria feed on the sugar and starch in



the food which creates lactic acid. This process actually preserves the food creating healthy enzymes, B-vitamins, and Omega-fatty acids. Many cultures around the world eat some sort of fermented foods; from Germany's sauerkraut to Korea's Kimchi. We have

become accustomed to eating an over processed diet and in doing so lost an important part of nutrition. I encourage you to give some or all of these recipes a try and get back to feeling your best. These recipes are easy to make and if nothing else, you might be able to manage a glass of champagne, white wine, or beer with a splash of Kombucha in it. There are many ways to add it into your diet. Baby steps folks.

You can buy a mother SCOBY at many places online. I usually order mine from Cultures for Health. You can also check out Amazon. There are a few folks in town who are passionate Kombucha makers and might share one of their SCOBYs with you. Try posting on the Vernonia Community Bulletin Board Facebook page.

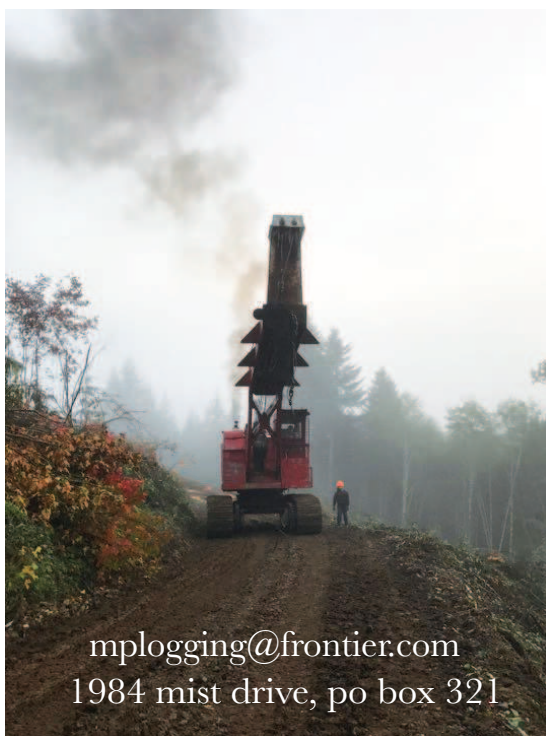
Homemade Kombucha Ingredients:

- 1 Mother SCOBY
- 1 Quart of live Kombucha
- 10 Quarts water
- 3 Cups sugar
- 5 Heaping spoons Darjeeling, Jasmine, green or any black tea
- I break this down to 1/3

Directions:

Boil 4 cups of water and add the tea and sugar. Let the tea boil for a couple minutes and the sugar dissolve. Let the water come to room temperature. Transfer to a glass container, add the SCOBY and 1 quart of live Kombucha. Let sit for 6 days with a cloth or paper towel to cover the opening.

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