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# CLIPPINGS

*A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach*

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**For Immediate Release**

### **The Benefits of Fermented Food**

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Cultures around the world have been eating fermented foods for years, from Sauerkraut in Germany to Kimichi in Korea and everywhere in between. Studies have shown the link between the probiotic rich foods and overall health.

#### **What are fermented foods?**

Fermented foods are foods that have been through a process of lacto-fermentation, a method of food preservation that also enhances the nutrient content of the food. The action of the bacteria makes the minerals in cultured foods more readily available to the body and also encourages the production of vitamins and enzymes within the cultured foods that are beneficial for digestion.

Almost any vegetable can be fermented, and fermenting farm-fresh produce is a great way to produce good nutrition year-round. Ferment one vegetable alone or create a mix of many different kinds, along with herbs and spices, for a great variety of cultured foods.

#### **Why eat fermented foods?**

Besides the fact that fermenting foods is like a super cool science experiment that you get to eat, there are several other great reasons to start making and eating fermented foods:

1. Probiotics – Eating fermented foods and drinking fermented drinks like Kefir and Kombucha will introduce beneficial bacteria and help the balance of bacteria in your digestive system. Probiotics have also been shown to help slow or reverse some diseases, improve bowel health, aid digestion, and improve immunity.
2. Absorb Food Better – Having the proper balance of gut bacteria and enough digestive enzymes helps you absorb more of the nutrients in the foods you eat. Pair this with a well-balanced diet of fruit, veggies and lean meat, and you will absorb many more nutrients from the foods you eat.
3. Budget Friendly – Incorporating healthy foods into your diet can get expensive, but not so with fermented foods. You can make your own whey at home for a couple of dollars, and using that and sea salt, ferment many foods very inexpensively. Drinks like Water Kefir and Kombucha can be made at home also and cost only pennies per serving.
4. Preserves Food Easily – Homemade salsa only lasts a few days in the fridge. Fermented homemade salsa lasts months! The same goes for sauerkraut, pickles, beets and other garden foods. Lacto-fermentation allows you to store these foods for longer periods of time without losing the nutrients like you would with traditional canning.

#### **Bring on the good bacteria!**

I confess that I personally do not have much experience using fermented foods. However, as my interest in them grows, I am coming to realize that with advances in technology and food preparation, these time-honored traditional foods have been largely lost in our society. Upon continued research, I look forward to incorporating these foods into my diet and experimenting with fermenting with different spices.