

How to make Sauerkraut

This is the most basic recipe. You can vary it by adding other vegetables e.g. grated carrot, onion or beetroot, and spices such as caraway seeds or ginger. You can also try using different types of cabbage – red cabbage makes a very colourful sauerkraut.

You will need:

1 white cabbage, the fresher the better

2g of sea salt for every 100g of cabbage

A straight sided glass or pottery container large enough for the whole cabbage once shredded

Something made from glass/pottery to weigh it down. A plate that fits reasonably closely inside the container with a jar full of water on top of it works well. Another suggestion is to fill a large ziploc bag with salt solution and use that.

1. Rinse the cabbage and remove any wilted or damaged leaves from the outside.
2. Cut the cabbage into quarters and cut out the core.
3. Weigh the cabbage so that you know how much salt to use.
4. Shred the cabbage *very* finely. Unless you're very patient and very skilled at chopping, the best way to do this is with a food processor, using the fine shredding blade.
5. Put the shredded cabbage into a bowl and add the salt. Mix it together well with your hands, squeezing the cabbage well to start extracting the juice from it. Once it's well mixed and squeezed, pack it down well and leave, uncovered, for 2-4 hours.
6. After 2-4 hours the cabbage should have released quite a lot of juice. If you now squash it down, the juice should cover the cabbage completely. If there isn't enough juice, make up some salt water, using 1tsp salt to 200ml water, and add just enough to cover the cabbage.
7. Put the cabbage and liquid into your straight sided glass or pottery container. Squash it down so that the cabbage is completely submerged, and place your weight on top to keep it that way. Cover the container with a clean tea towel.
8. Put the container in a cool, dark place. Not too cold, or fermentation won't get going, and not too warm as you're more likely to get mould and spoilage. Check on it every few days – if you press on your weight you should see bubbles coming up. Remove any scum or bits of white/light grey mold from the surface with a clean spoon and wipe off the weight as necessary. (This mold is not harmful. If you see any black mold, discard the sauerkraut. Pink slime on the surface is a yeast that, while not harmful, spoils the flavor and texture.) Pack the sauerkraut back down and replace the weights. If the sauerkraut is not fully submerged, add additional salt water. Replace the tea towel.
9. After 2-3 weeks use a clean fork to take a sample. It should taste sour and salty, rather like a pickle. Pack it into smaller containers and refrigerate. It should keep for at least 6 months in the fridge.

Have a tablespoon or two every day to support your gut flora – use it instead of Branston pickle or piccalilli, or as a vegetable with a meal. It goes really well with sausages, and with pork generally.