

Simple sauerkraut

INGREDIENTS:

2 lbs. green or red cabbage
(about 1 large head or 2 small)
4 tsp. sea salt

PREPARATION:

Rinse cabbage and remove the outer leaves. Slice thinly, with either a knife or the shredding attachment of a food processor. You may slice it thin or thick, but the key is making it uniform in size.

Place shredded cabbage in a large metal or glass bowl. Sprinkle with salt. Massage salt into the cabbage; it will start to release water. Continue massaging until you have quite a bit of water and cabbage starts to soften. This might take a few minutes, and it does require some arm and hand muscles!

Using a large glass jar or kraut crock, press cabbage into the container. Do this slowly, with just a cup or two at a time so you can really press down. You want to compact the cabbage as much as possible to eliminate air bubbles and release more water.

Once all of the cabbage is in the jar or crock, place something heavy on top (like another jar filled with water) to weigh it down. Press down hard on the jar until water covers the cabbage. Ideally, you want at least 1 inch of water on top. Cover jar with a cloth and secure it with a rubber band. Tip: Label jar with the date so you know when it started to ferment. Place your kraut on the counter or in a cabinet.

Every few days, check your kraut. Smell it and maybe even take a little taste with a clean fork. Mainly, you want to make sure it's not smelling funky (like garbage or old socks) and that water still covers the cabbage. If the cabbage creeps up above the water, press down on your small jar to compact it more.

After a few days, it should get bubbly. That's a good thing! After a few more days, it should start to smell and taste sour. You can eat your kraut pretty much anytime, but letting it ferment for 2-6 weeks is usually ideal.

When you are ready to taste it, don't be afraid. As long as it smells like kraut, meaning a little bit sour, you should be good. If it smells like old socks or garbage, or if you see obvious signs of mold (green or black), something likely went wrong and you'll want to start over.

If there is a white layer on top, that is normal. You can simply scoop it out. If there's a pink layer on top, that is a type of mold but you can scoop that out, too. You can eat everything underneath.

When you are ready to taste it, smell it first. If it smells good, take a small bite and swish it around in your mouth but spit it out (don't swallow it). If it passes both of these tests, dig in and enjoy your kraut. Transfer your kraut to clean mason jars and store it in the fridge (it will safely keep for many months).

Serving size varies depending on the size of your cabbage but should get 1 to 2 large mason jars of sauerkraut.