



**TGFI**

Going green

# Fermented Foods

GUIDE FOR CLIENTS



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# Introducing Fermented Foods

Fermented foods - think kimchi, sauerkraut, kefir, tempeh, kombucha, and yogurt. These are just a handful of fermented foods available and commonly used for health benefits...

...From reducing the risk of heart disease to improving digestion, boosting immunity, and even supporting weight loss, fermented foods can become a meaningful contribution to a well-balanced diet.

Fermentation is a process where bacteria and yeast break down sugars, effectively preserving food and enriching it with probiotics - these are the good bacteria that your gut needs to thrive.

A key advantage of fermented foods is the boost of beneficial probiotics for your gut, which can lead to improved digestion and better immunity.

Plus, fermented foods may help with blood sugar control, reduce heart disease risk, and other health conditions. Furthermore, the flavours that these foods can add to your meals make them a delicious and easy way to upgrade your diet.

While fermented foods are considered a healthy addition, introducing them too quickly into your diet may lead to increased digestive symptoms such as bloating, gas, and even constipation. This is because your digestive system needs time to adjust to the increased amount of beneficial bacteria from these foods.

It's typically recommended to introduce fermented foods into your diet slowly, starting with smaller amounts like a tablespoon of sauerkraut juice, for example, and gradually increasing over time.

# Popular Fermented Foods & Drinks

Here are popular fermented foods and drinks that have been shown to help improve health and digestion...

COCONUT KEFIR  
UNSWEETENED COCONUT  
YOGHURT  
DAIRY KEFIR  
PLAIN GREEK YOGHURT  
KIMCHI  
SAUERKRAUT  
MISO  
TEMPEH  
TOFU  
KOMBUCHA  
BUTTERMILK  
APPLE CIDER VINEGAR

While there are currently no official guidelines regarding how often you should eat fermented foods, adding a few servings to your daily diet may be beneficial.

Start by eating one or two small servings per day, and then slowly work your way up.

Getting beneficial bacteria from whole foods is a simple and cheaper way to take advantage of probiotic health benefits and be in control of how much you are consuming, limiting unwanted side effects like bloating and gas.



# Unsweetened Coconut Kefir

Coconut kefir is a fermented beverage containing probiotics, the beneficial bacteria to help support and nourish the gut microbiome.

These beneficial bacteria can help to support your digestion, but if fermented foods are new to you, start slowly.

## BENEFITS

The probiotics in coconut kefir can help to nourish and support the gut microbiome by promoting the population of beneficial bacteria.

You may experience bloating, gas, or even constipation or diarrhea as your digestive system adjusts to the new balance of gut bacteria...

...Therefore, it's important to introduce fermented foods slowly into your diet.

# Unsweetened Coconut Yoghurt

Coconut yogurt is usually made from fermented coconut milk, and is an ideal fermented food option for people following a vegan diet or a dairy intolerance.

Coconut yogurt is lactose and casein free, naturally creamy, and sweet, and can be either store-bought or homemade.

Opt for unsweetened store-bought.

## BENEFITS

Coconut yoghurt is a source of probiotics, which are live active cultures that promote the growth of beneficial gut bacteria.

Probiotics not only help with digestion but also help reduce inflammation and strengthen the immune system



# Plain Dairy Kefir


Dairy kefir is a kind of yoghurt you can drink, produced by fermenting milk using kefir grains, and stands out in the fermented food world.

It can host many microorganisms, arguably making it a more popular probiotic source than other dairy ferments, including yoghurt. Kefir's microbial richness, including the presence of *Lactobacillus kefir*, protects the gut against harmful bacteria, ensuring a balanced microbiome.

Not only can kefir help to alleviate common digestive issues like bloating and constipation, but it also provides relief in more severe digestive conditions. Moreover, its lactic acid bacteria naturally break down lactose, making kefir a possible option for those with lactose intolerance.

Studies have hinted at kefir's potential to strengthen the immune system and even suggest possible anti-cancer properties.

Dairy kefir is also an excellent source of calcium and vitamin K2—both pivotal for optimal bone health.



Preliminary animal studies have suggested that kefir might play a role in mitigating allergic reactions and asthma, though more research is required.

Choose your kefir wisely, as store-bought kefirs, especially flavoured ones, have added sugars.

Opt for plain versions.

**Start Slow:** Introducing kefir suddenly might cause some digestive discomfort initially. Starting with smaller amounts can help you ease into the transition.

# Plain Greek Yoghurt

Greek yogurt is a nutrient-dense dairy option renowned for its high protein content and a plethora of essential vitamins and minerals such as B12, riboflavin (B2), calcium, and selenium.

Compared to regular yogurt, Greek yogurt typically has a higher protein concentration and fewer carbohydrates, making it a favourable choice for many dietary plans.

## BENEFITS

Greek yogurt is beneficial for gut health as it often contains beneficial bacterial strains.

Including it in your diet can help boost the variety of good bacteria in your gut, which supports digestion. But it's crucial to choose the right kind of Greek yogurt. Opt for plain, not flavoured, and contain "Live & Active Cultures".

# Kimchi

A classic Korean dish brimming with probiotic benefits, traditionally crafted from salted and fermented vegetables. The process involves fermenting cabbage, radishes, and other vegetables in a blend of salt, garlic, ginger, and chilli pepper. The flavour can vary considerably, depending on the specific ingredients and the length of fermentation.

However, it's generally a delightful mix of spices, sourness, and a slight tanginess. While there are many kimchi varieties, most are known for their fiery kick and spiciness, although milder varieties are also available for those who prefer less heat.

A typical batch of kimchi has cabbage, radishes, onions, garlic, ginger, fish sauce, and Korean chilli powder. It offers a good amount of fibre and because it's rich in probiotics, kimchi also contains prebiotics, food for the good bacteria in your large intestines, supporting a healthier gut microbiome.

Additionally, kimchi is renowned for its anti-inflammatory properties, its role in weight management, and may even help prevent yeast infections. Loaded with crucial vitamins like vitamin C, carotenes, and B-complex, and minerals including iron, potassium, and calcium, kimchi is indeed an excellent contribution to the diet.

Enjoy kimchi with a few considerations in mind.

Traditional kimchi is known for its heat, which may not suit everyone and could instigate acid reflux in those prone to it. If you're sensitive to spicy foods, limit your serving size or seek out less spicy alternatives. Additionally, fermented foods like kimchi can lead to bloating, and as kimchi is typically made with cabbage, a known trigger for gas, this can be an issue for some. Also, bear in mind that many varieties of kimchi are high in sodium, so portion control is vital to prevent overconsumption of salt.

**Caution:** Kimchi makes a brilliant addition to your diet, nevertheless, it's crucial to introduce this food gradually into your diet to prevent any potential discomfort, such as bloating or gas, especially if you're not accustomed to it.



# Sauerkraut

Sauerkraut is a type of fermented cabbage which has impressive health benefits. It's rich in fibre, vitamins, and minerals, and its probiotic content helps with nutrient absorption.

The unpasteurised variety of sauerkraut is particularly beneficial due to its probiotic content. These beneficial bacteria help to strengthen the immune system, help with blood sugar balance, and contribute to improved digestion and overall health.

While probiotic supplements are very popular and typically contain between 1-50 billion colony-forming units (CFUs) per dose, one gram of sauerkraut may contain 1,000-100 million CFUs.

These are vastly different amounts of CFU's, but what sets sauerkraut apart is the diversity of its probiotic strains, potentially providing a broader spectrum of health benefits compared to the consistent intake of a probiotic supplement.

Sauerkraut provides more than probiotic benefits - it's also an excellent source of vitamin C and iron, key nutrients for a stronger immune system.

If you're new to sauerkraut, ease into it. A daily tablespoon is enough to reintroduce to your gut microbiome without triggering uncomfortable side effects like bloating or gas.

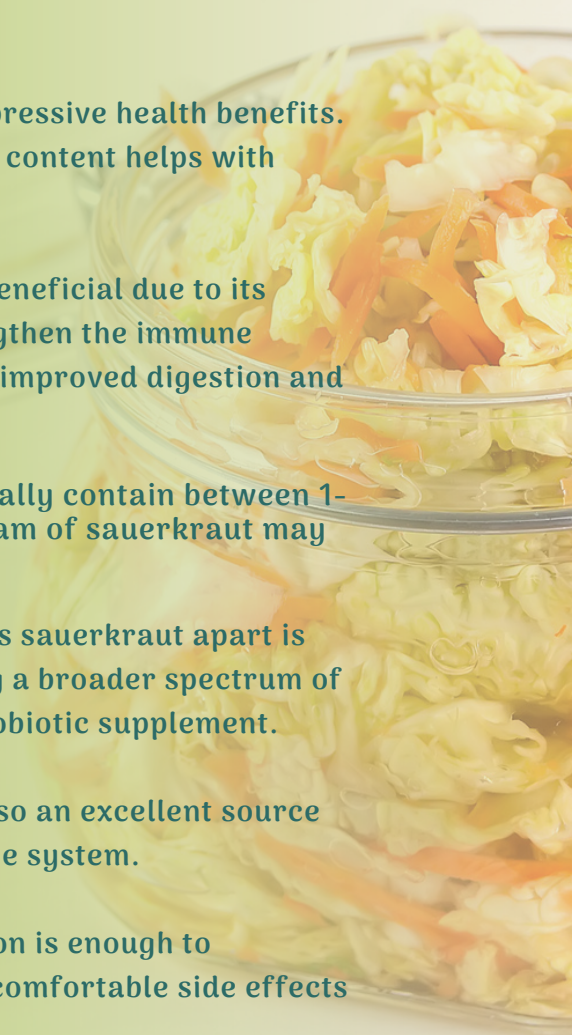
When buying sauerkraut, knowing what to look for is important to ensure you're getting a traditionally fermented, probiotic-rich product.

Buy unpasteurised, raw sauerkraut in your grocery store's refrigerated section, NOT off the shelf.

Read the ingredient list carefully. authentic, traditional sauerkraut should only contain simple ingredients like cabbage, salt, and water.

You might also find sauerkraut with additional natural ingredients such as carrots, garlic, and spices like cumin and ginger, which can add more flavour and nutritional value.

However, steer clear of products that list vinegar, sugar, or sodium benzoate (a preservative) in their ingredients. These are NOT traditionally used in fermentation and can indicate that the product has been pickled or preserved rather than fermented - these will not offer the same probiotic benefits.



# Miso

Miso is made from fermented soybeans and is a complete protein source, rich in important nutrients, including probiotics that can help boost gut health.

Miso is a fermented condiment widely enjoyed in Asia and has also gained popularity in the Western world.

It's available in various shades and tastes. The darker its colour, the bolder and saltier its flavour.

## HOW TO USE MISO

Think beyond soup! Use miso for broths, marinades, casseroles, or even as a base for dipping sauces, spreads, and salad dressings. If you're mixing it with something cold, even better!

Too much heat can affect the probiotic content, therefore add it to a hot dish once removed from the heat.

It's always best to dissolve miso in a little warm water before adding to avoid it "clumping".


# Tempeh

Tempeh is a fermented soybean product that's gained popularity as a staple for plant-based protein as this nutrient-packed ingredient offers versatility in dishes, from stir-fries to wraps.

One of the notable benefits of tempeh is its probiotic content. Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that can positively influence gut health. Alongside this, tempeh is also rich in prebiotics, which are fibres that feed the beneficial bacteria.

Tempeh is a good source of soy protein content that can help keep hunger pangs at bay. And the soy isoflavones not only have antioxidant properties that combat oxidative stress but can also help in managing cholesterol levels.

Tempeh has a good amount of calcium which plays a crucial role in bone health.



Those allergic to soy should steer clear of tempeh, and individuals with thyroid issues might need to moderate their consumption.

Tempeh is more than just a vegetarian alternative. Its dense nutrient profile and probiotic and prebiotic benefits make it an excellent choice for anyone looking to boost their overall dietary health.

Choose wisely, and buy organic tempeh when possible.

# Tofu

Tofu is essentially condensed soy milk that's been pressed into varying levels of firm blocks.

It's nutrient-dense and has a rich protein content, boasting all the essential amino acids.

## G M O . . .

Many varieties of tofu are made from genetically modified (GMO) soybeans. For those concerned about GMOs, opting for organic tofu is a good idea.

Tofu contains antinutrients like phytates, which might impact the absorption of certain minerals. However, methods like soaking, sprouting, or fermenting soybeans before tofu production can significantly reduce these levels.

Tofu is also rich in isoflavones, plant compounds that can mimic estrogen in the body, albeit with weaker effects. These isoflavones have been connected to various health benefits, including a reduced risk of certain diseases like cancer, diabetes, and heart ailments.

## C O N C E R N S

There have been concerns regarding tofu's isoflavone content, especially its potential role in cancer risk among postmenopausal individuals. However, a comprehensive 2015 review by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) found no elevated risk of cancers like breast cancer.



# Kombucha

A fermented tea that offers beneficial bacteria known as probiotics. These probiotics can support gut health and enhance digestion.

Kombucha is a good source of antioxidants and is a refreshing "fizzy" drink enjoyed for its health benefits.

## BENEFITS

The acetic acid produced during kombucha's fermentation process has potent antimicrobial properties. This means kombucha can help in eliminating harmful pathogenic bacteria.

## CONS...

Kombucha does have a small alcohol content, usually less than 0.5%, but brands will vary. It also contains some residual sugars, which serve as food for the fermenting gut bacteria. If you're watching your sugar intake or are sensitive to alcohol, consuming kombucha in moderation is essential.



## Buttermilk

Buttermilk is, quite simply, fermented milk, and the buttermilk you find in stores is typically "cultured", thicker than regular milk, and a little bit lumpy.

It has a tart flavour and contains live cultures (probiotics) similar to yoghurt's.

It's often used to make "fluffy" pancakes, biscuits, muffins and waffles. It can also be used in marinades.

### CONS

Like other dairy products, buttermilk contains lactose, which can be problematic for people with lactose intolerance.

# Apple Cider Vinegar

Apple cider vinegar (ACV) is often regarded as a healthy addition, and some research suggests that ACV may be beneficial due to its antimicrobial and antioxidant effects.

Apple cider vinegar is produced by fermenting apple sugars, transforming them into acetic acid. This acid is a primary component of vinegar. It might be the source of its potential health advantages and is thought to help kill harmful bacteria or prevent them from multiplying.

ACV has demonstrated the potential to enhance insulin sensitivity and reduce post-meal blood sugar levels.



THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS INCLUDE:  
WEIGHT CONTROL, BLOOD SUGAR, CHOLESTEROL AND  
ACID REFLUX.

Use it cautiously, and always dilute it with water due to its high acidity, which can erode tooth enamel and irritate the oesophagus.

Consult healthcare professionals before making it a regular part of your health regimen.