

Simple ways to introduce fermented foods

Fermenting foods is a traditional way of preserving foods that enhances the nutritional property of those foods. In particular, fermented foods are naturally high in beneficial bacteria, which support our gastrointestinal and general health.

Different fermented foods will have different qualities and strains of bacteria so vary the type that you use. Always start with small amounts until you gauge how your digestive system is adapting.

- Yoghurt is our most popular fermented food in Ireland. But all yoghurts are not the same! Chose natural, full fat yoghurt, organic if possible and steer clear of flavoured yoghurts that can be loaded with additional sugar.
- If you can't tolerate dairy, try natural coconut, almond or organic soya yoghurt. Great to have as a snack with fruit and seeds, or add to curries, use to make dressings.....
- Sauerkraut – tasty on its own, makes great condiment, especially with fatty and salty dishes. Try it with smoked mackerel, mature cheese, an omelette or any other deeply savoury flavours. Make your own or buy unpasteurized sauerkraut e.g. The Cultured Food Company or eaten alive. If buying, make sure your sauerkraut is unpasteurised
- Kimchi is a spicy fermented cabbage dish, that like sauerkraut, tastes great alongside savoury foods. Try a small amount with a salad or stirfry
- Kombucha: as a healthy start to the day take on an empty stomach, or with botanicals added can become a more interesting drink to have all day – try with ginger. Kombucha is one of the easiest ferments to make yourself at home. You will need to get your hands on a SCOBY (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeasts), or you can make one yourself from shop bought kombucha. Read more about how to make your own kombucha [here](#)
- Kefir: use it as yoghurt or in smoothies. Start with small amounts e.g. 30ml , particularly if you are making your own.
- Miso paste adds an unami flavor and a probiotic boost to stirfries, casseroles and salad dressings. If using in warm dishes, add after cooking to avoid destroying the bacteria
- Tempeh is fermented soya bean curd that can be used to replace tofu in savoury dishes like stirfries
[Cultures for health](#) a good website with directions on making your own fermented foods

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Simple recipes to start with probiotic foods

Miso almond spread

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Ingredients

½ cup almond butter
2 tbsp white miso paste
½ cup warm water

Directions

- Mix ingredients in a bowl, then spoon into a jar and keep in the fridge

Use as a healthy spread or thin further and use as a dip or dressing

Miso paste can also be used in stir fries and soups. Just remember to add at the end of the cooking process to avoid destroying the beneficial bacteria.

Avocado cup salad with ginger miso dressing

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

3 tbsp. toasted sesame oil
2 tsp white miso
1 tbsp. rice vinegar
1 tbsp. tamari
½ tsp finely grated ginger root
½ cucumber, peeled, seeds removed and diced
1 cup diced radishes
2 spring onions, finely chopped
Small handful fresh coriander, finely chopped (optional)
4 avocados, perfectly ripe
2 tsp sesame seeds, lightly toasted

Directions:

- Mix sesame oil, miso, rice vinegar and ginger in a bowl. Add in cucumber, radish and spring onion, season and mix well
- Cut avocados in half and remove the pits. Score the halves with a knife in both directions forming a grid. Be careful not to cut all the way through.
- To serve fill the avocado cups with salad mix and sprinkle with seeds and serve with a spoon

For a bigger meal, place leaves in a bowl, add salad, avocado and dressing and toss well. Sprinkle with seeds and serve

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Chicken miso soup

Preparation time 1 hour

Ingredients

1 onion, chopped

½ red chilli (de-seeded if not too much heat required) , finely chopped

1 thumb sized piece of ginger, finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

500g chicken pieces e.g. wings, thighs, ideally organic

Jar miso paste – 1 tsp per portion of soup

Directions

- Saute onion, chilli, ginger and garlic in a large pot
- Add 1 onion, 2 carrots, 2 sticks of celery and chicken pieces
- Cover with water, bring to the boil and simmer gently for c. 45 min.
- Take off the boil and allow to cool until warm but off the boil. Portion a bowl of soup and stir in 1 tsp miso paste.
- Optional: add spiralsised vegetables or rice noodles

For a vegetarian version, replace chicken with tofu or tempeh and shorten cooking time to 15 – 20 minutes.

Easy probiotic berry 'ice cream'

Preparation time 5 minutes, serves 8

Ingredients

400g pack frozen mixed berries (organic or Irish)

6 - 8 tbsp. Kefir / natural 'live' yoghurt

Squeeze lime juice

2 tbsp. St Dalfour / Follains no added sugar raspberry or strawberry jam (optional)

Directions

- Place all ingredients in a food processor and blend until creamy and consistency of ice cream
- Serve straight away or store in freezer.
- Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving

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Kimchi

Makes 1 x 500ml jar

Ingredients

500g napa cabbage (also called Chinese cabbage), cored and shredded

1 tbsp fine sea salt

1 carrot, peeled

2 spring onions, trimmed and roughly chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

½ thumb sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and grated

1 tbsp fish sauce (Nam pla)

½ tsp Korean chilli flakes (or use regular chilli flakes)

Splash fresh filtered water

Directions

- Place the cabbage in a large bowl, sprinkle with salt and massage firmly until softened. Cover with cold water, weigh down with something heavy and leave for 1 -2 hours
- While the cabbage is resting, slice the carrot into ribbons using a potato peeler and place in a large bowl with the spring onion
- Blend the garlic, ginger, fish sauce, chille and a little filtered water e.g. in a Nutribullet to form a paste. Add to the bowl with the carrots and spring onion
- Rinse cabbage under cold running water and dry in a salad spinner, then squeeze out any excess water from the cabbage leaves before adding to the bowl with the carrot mixture.
- Mix well to ensure all the veg is well coated and transfer to a 500ml glass jar, pressing down firmly so the brine covers the veg. Add a weight e.g. a small bowl or clean stone to keep the veg under the brine and seal the jar
- Store at room temperature for 5 days, then transfer to the fridge. Use within 6 weeks

Add to salads or enjoy on wholegrain rye bread. Vary spices as you like. If you don't have time to make Kimchi, try The Cultured Food Company or Eaten alive brands, stocked in most health food stores.

Please note: if you are new to fermented foods, we recommend that you start with very small amounts e.g. ¼ tbsp. or less.

Based on a recipe from highly recommended 'Clever Batch' cookbook by Susan Jane White