

Taking a New Look at Fermented Foods

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Introduction

The practice of fermenting foods has been around for thousands of years. According to some historians, fermentation was discovered accidentally when workers building the Great Wall in China packed some cabbages with salt in a pot, hoping to preserve them. To their surprise, when they opened the pot later, they found it bubbling and with a pleasant sour flavor. Whether you are tasting kombucha, kimchi, or other fermented food for the first time, or you want to try your hand at making a fermented product at home, this fact sheet can provide the tools to open up a new experience.

The basic method of preserving vegetables in a salty brine spread around the world, so that today, nearly every culture with access to salt makes some kind of fermented food. The simplicity of this preservation method coupled with its unique flavors and reported health benefits made fermenting food popular worldwide. Until the introduction of modern canning, fermentation was one of the chief methods people used to preserve their harvest. As people embraced pasteurization, and later commercial food manufacturing, passing on the techniques and traditions of fermentation were nearly lost. Today, there is a renewed interest in preparing fermented foods at home for several reasons. This fact sheet is designed to provide simple and safe instructions for fermenting foods in the home kitchen.

Lesson Objectives

Participants will:

- Become familiar with a variety of fermented foods by sampling them.
- Become familiar with the history of fermenting foods as a way to preserve them.



Image: *Homemade sauerkraut*

- Acquire skills to use the tools to ferment foods in a mason jar.
- Understand the health benefits from eating fermented foods regularly and restoring healthy gut bacteria.

Intended audiences:

- Adult groups of any age, including community groups
- Health-related support groups

Preparation:

- Read “Taking a New Look at Fermentation” fact sheet (MF3491) and this leader’s guide. Familiarize yourself with the terms and strategies outlined in them.
- Experiment with fermentation in your own home so that you can provide personal experience.
- Make copies of the evaluation tool on page 3 of this guide.

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Presenting the information

- Give each participant a copy of the fact sheet. Allow 25 to 30 minutes to teach the lesson. Review what fermentation is, as well as the health benefits of incorporating fermented foods into their diet. Discuss the techniques for fermenting vegetables and review the rules for successful fermentation.
- Introduce program participants to several different fermented foods through a taste test.
- If possible, have a vegetable available to demonstrate the preparation for fermentation. Show how to thinly slice the vegetable, add non-iodized salt, and work that into the vegetable.
- Show participants the products available on the market that allow them to ferment foods in a mason jar.
- If time and space allows, set up a fermentation workshop with community participants. Determine an appropriate fee and provide a mason jar, weight, and pickle pipe for each participant, along with ingredients to complete a recipe. Each participant should leave the workshop with a jar of fermenting goodness!

Conclusion

Many people have lost touch with one of the oldest and simplest ways of preserving food – fermentation. If, after sampling fermented foods, you find that you enjoy the flavors, you may want to try creating a fermented product. By following the simple steps outlined in this fact sheet you have the tools to safely experiment with fermenting foods in your own home. You have the opportunity to find out for yourself how delicious and nutritious fermented food can be. The steps are simple and the benefits are many as you safely incorporate fermented food into your healthy diet. Enjoy!

References

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Evaluation

Taking a New Look at Fermented Foods

Local Unit where program was offered: _____

Date _____ Instructor _____

After participating in the program/workshop I gained knowlege about:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Naming a variety of fermented foods and beverages.					
2. The basic principles of how to ferment vegetables.					
3. Some possible health benefits of consuming fermented foods.					
4. As a result of this program, I have learned _____.					

As a result of this program/workshop I will:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. Consider consuming fermented foods and beverages regularly.					
6. Prepare fermented vegetables in my own kitchen.					
7. Share what I have learned with someone else.					
8. Overall, How valuable was this program to you? _____.					

9. My age: 18-29 years 30-39 years 40-49 years 50-59 years 60-69 years
 70+ years Prefer not to respond
10. Gender: Female Male Prefer not to respond
11. Race: American Indian or Alaska Native Black or African American
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Asian White Prefer not to respond
12. How would you describe your ethnicity? (Hispanic/Latino):
 Hispanic/Latino Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino Prefer not to respond
13. Marital Status: Married Single Single living with partner Widowed
 Separated or Divorced Prefer not to respond

Thank you for completing this evaluation. We greatly appreciate your feedback.

Reviewers

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