

Sweet Garlic Sauerkraut

SureFire Sauerkraut Teaching Recipe



INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 carrots
- 2-3 cloves garlic
- 1 medium head fresh cabbage
- 1 tablespoon salt

SUPPLIES

- Kitchen scale
- Cutting board, knife and large mixing bowl
- Vegetable peeler, measuring spoons & grater
- 1-quart wide-mouth canning jar
- 4-ounce "jelly" canning jar
- Width-mouth plastic storage cap

NOTES AND TIPS (Recently revised list of tips at the end of this recipe.):

I highly recommend that you weigh your cabbage and vegetables so that you add the proper amount of salt. After teaching dozens of people in my MakeSauerkraut! workshops, I've found that success rates hit 99.9% when participants used a scale to ensure the correct amount of salt is used in their ferment.

If you use a digital scale that automatically shuts off after a few minutes, be sure to write down the weight of your bowl. You'll be adding the weight of the carrots and cabbage to that number.

If you can't find the white plastic storage caps, you can also use the rim and lid that come with the canning jars. I prefer the white plastic caps because they don't discolor like the metal ones when coming in contact with the sauerkraut.

DIRECTIONS

1. SET UP. Gather Supplies & Set Up Scale. Place your bowl on the scale. You don't want to include the weight of your bowl in your measurements. So, either zero out the scale or write down the Tare weight of your bowl.

2. CHOP. Prep Your Vegetables and Cabbage. Peel and grate two to three carrots. Add these to the bowl. Finely mince two to three garlic cloves and add these to the bowl too.

Discard the limp **outer leaves** of the cabbage, setting aside one of the cleaner ones for use in Step 5.

Quarter the cabbage, leaving the core in. Though not sliced for your sauerkraut, the core helps hold the layers of cabbage together, making the slicing job easier.



Captain Cook carried over 60 barrels of sauerkraut on his ship for his second round-the-world voyage. The sauerkraut contained sufficient quantities of Vitamin C to protect his entire crew from scurvy, a disease that commonly decimated crews.

Finely slice cabbage. Add sliced cabbage to your bowl until the weight of everything is **1 3/4 pounds (28 ounces, 800 grams)**.

WHY 1 3/4 pounds? 1 3/4 pounds is the perfect amount of cabbage and vegetables to mix with 1 tablespoon of salt to create the right saltiness of brine to ensure perfectly fermented sauerkraut. And, it's the perfect amount of sauerkraut to pack into a 1-quart jar.



- 3. SALT. Create the Brine in Which Your Sauerkraut Will Ferment.** For this you need salt. Salt pulls water out of the cabbage and vegetables to create an environment where the good bacteria (mainly *lactobacillus*) can grow and proliferate and the bad bacteria die off.

Sprinkle vegetables and cabbage with **1 tablespoon (15 ml) salt** and mix well. Now's a good time to let the salt do its magic while you sip a cup of tea and tidy up the kitchen.

Next, massage and squeeze the cabbage and vegetables with strong hands until moist, thus creating your brine. The fresher the cabbage and the higher the moisture content, the quicker the brine will be created.

You should be able to tilt the bowl and see a good-sized puddle of brine, about 2-3 inches in diameter. This process can take anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes.



- 4. PACK. Pack Mixture Into Jar.** Now that you have a puddle of brine, it's time to pack the cabbage mixture into your jar. **Grab handfuls** of the salty, juicy cabbage mixture and pack them into your quart-sized wide-mouth canning jar, periodically pressing the mixture down tightly with your fist or a large spoon so that the brine rises above the top of the mixture and no air pockets remain.

Leave 1-2 inches of space between the top of your cabbage and the top of the jar. **Pour any brine** left in your mixing bowl into the jar and scrape out any loose bits stuck to the sides of the bowl.



Modern food-processing technologies disconnect us from our food source by separating us from the raw ingredients, keeping us ignorant of what actually happens to them, and ensuring that there is as little human contact with food as possible. —Jessica Prentice, *Full Moon Feast*

5. SUBMERGE. Hold Ferment Below Brine. Now make sure your fermenting mixture is in a safe anaerobic (no air) environment. This means that you need to keep the cabbage mixture submerged in the brine while it ferments. Air is bad for the fermenting sauerkraut and can enable the bad bacteria to grow and proliferate, creating mold and other undesirable by-products.

Take that cabbage leaf you saved in Step 1, tear it down to just fit in the jar, and place it over the surface of the packed cabbage. Forgot to save a cabbage leaf? No problem. You can fold a narrow piece of parchment paper to size or even cut an old plastic lid to size.

To hold the vegetables below the brine, place the 4-ounce jelly jar on top of the cabbage leaf, right side up with its lid removed. The jar might stick out of the top of the jar a bit. Don't worry: when you screw on the lid, it will get pressed down into place.

Lightly screw the white plastic storage lid onto the jar. By leaving the lid on somewhat loose, CO₂ gasses that will build up during the fermentation process can escape.

If you have lots of brine in the jar, you may have to more some out to get the lid on without the liquid overflowing.

I like to label my jars using green or blue painter's tape and a permanent marker. I note the flavor of sauerkraut I made and the date I started fermenting.



Sauerkraut achieves a succulent gourmet savor that coleslaw never reaches.

6. FERMENT. Ferment for 1 to 4 Weeks. Time now for the friendly bacteria to do their work while you watch and wait. The friendly bacteria that live on the vegetables will be eating the sugars in the cabbage and carrots, multiplying and releasing copious amounts of lactic acid that act as a “poison” for any of the bad bacteria. Let them work while you rest.

Place your jar of fermenting sauerkraut in a shallow bowl (to catch the brine that may leak out during the first week of fermentation), out of direct sunlight.

The ideal fermentation temperature is between **65 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit** (18–23 degrees Celsius). The lower the temperature, the slower the fermentation.



The higher the temperature, the faster the fermentation.

The first week is when you'll see the most action in the jar. The mixture will get bubbly and the brine will rise in the jar, likely seeping out from under the lid. Your home may even start to smell like sauerkraut!

Should the brine level fall (very unlikely) and remain below the level of the sauerkraut during this first week,

dilute 1 tablespoon of salt in 2 cups of water and pour some of this brine over the sauerkraut.

Don't worry if the brine disappears after the 7- to 10-day mark. By this time, you've created a safe environment in which the bacteria that would cause mold or slime has been chased away by the beneficial bacteria produced during the fermentation process.



At the 1-week period, open the jar, pull out the small jar, and smell and taste your sauerkraut. At this point, you can decide to start eating it or let it ferment for bit longer.

You can ferment your sauerkraut for up to 4 weeks. The longer you ferment it, the greater the number and variety of beneficial bacteria with research showing that numbers peak at day 21. I suggest that people ferment their first jar for 1 week, and then the next jar for 2–4 weeks, tasting it at 1-week intervals to determine the level of tang and crunch preferred.

7. STORE. Store in Refrigerator for Up to 1 Year. After fermenting your sauerkraut, it's ready to go into the refrigerator and ready to be eaten. Refrigeration slows the fermentation process. **Rinse off the outside of the jar.** You can take the little jar out. **Add to your label** how long you fermented the contents.

Enjoy a forkful or two of your sauerkraut with your meals. It will continue to ferment – aging like a fine wine – but at a much slower rate than before.



If successfully fermented (tastes and smells good), your sauerkraut can be kept preserved in your refrigerator for up to a year.



If you're enjoying sauerkraut for the first time, start with just a forkful and gradually increase the amount until you're eating about 1/4 to 1/2 cup a day. Koreans consume 1 quart of sauerkraut weekly; Americans 1 quart annually!

SureFire Sauerkraut in a Jar: Notes & Tips

SET UP: Gather Supplies and Set Up Scale

1. **Use green cabbage.** You'll have the greatest success if you use the traditional round-headed green cabbage for your first few batches of sauerkraut. Stay away from red cabbage, initially. It has a deeper, earthier flavor and tougher leaves that often takes longer to ferment.
2. **Use a scale.** I highly recommend that you weigh your cabbage and vegetables so that you add the proper amount of salt.
3. **If using a digital scale, note bowl weight.** Most digital scales automatically shut off after a few minutes. If your scale does, put your bowl on the scale and write down its weight. My favorite scale - that can be programmed to NOT shut off automatically - is the My Weigh KD8000.
4. **What to use as a weight?** If you don't have access to the small 4-ounce (125 ml) "jelly" canning jar there is a comprehensive list in this post: [Fermentation Weights: Keep Your Ferment Below the Brine](#).
5. **Other lid options.** If you can't find the white plastic storage caps, you can use the rim and lid that comes with canning jars. I just prefer the white plastic caps because they don't discolor like the metal ones do when coming in contact with the sauerkraut.
6. **Keep your hands warm.** So you don't have to work your hands in a bowl of cold cabbage, you'll find it useful to pull your cabbage out of the refrigerator the day before you plan to make your sauerkraut.
7. **Make sure your salt does not contain iodine,** sugar or anti-caking agents that may interfere with the fermentation process. [What is the Best Salt for Making Fermented Sauerkraut?](#) I use Himalayan Pink Salt in all my recipes.
8. **You do not need to sterilize your jar,** just wash with dish soap and rinse thoroughly.



PREP: Chop Your Vegetables & Cabbage

9. **Leave the core in.** I find it easier to slice my cabbage if the core is not removed. It serves to hold the layers of cabbage together and make the job of slicing easier.
10. **Slice towards the core until it gets too thick and then toss the core.** Often the core is not as sweet as the rest of the cabbage and can be a bit tough, so I compost the cabbage core.
11. **Food processor?** Some fermenters love to use a food processor to slice their cabbage. If you do, the feed tube will result in nicer slices than the S-blade. If you use the S-blade, be sure to not over-process the cabbage. Some readers have had success with the large grating disc.
12. **Consider a mandolin for slicing your cabbage.** I recommend the wide-body Benriner. It is so easy to get thin, ribbon-like slices.
13. **When to use the food processor?** When making large batches, the food processor is handy for grating large amounts of carrots, mincing lots of garlic and prepping quantities of other vegetables in your recipe.
14. **Follow the 75-25 Rule.** When creating your own recipes, keep at least 75% of the weight in cabbage and no more than 25% of the total weight as "flavoring" ingredients. This makes for a nice flavor balance and a healthy ferment.



SALT: Create Your Brine

15. **No-Pound Sauerkraut.** If you want the salt to work for you, or are feeling lazy and want to put your feet up and sip on a cup of Joe, you can leave the salted cabbage alone for 20 minutes to an hour. Return later and you'll notice the cabbage is glistening with "sweat." This is the brine-making process already in progress. You will not have to massage the cabbage as much now.
16. **Fresh cabbage.** The fresher the cabbage and the higher the moisture content, the quicker the brine will be created. If you're making sauerkraut in the fall with fresh cabbage, you'll see this for sure. On the other hand, if you're making sauerkraut with cabbage that has been stored for months, you'll find it harder to create the brine and there'll be less of it.
17. **Weigh you salt.** If you have a digital scale and the personality for exactness, you can use your scale to weigh the correct amount of salt. [Salt by Weight for Delicious Sauerkraut... Batch after Batch](#)

PACK: Pack Mixture Into Jar

18. **Kraut Pounder.** If your hand is too large to fit into the jar, a kraut pounder can be used as well as a large spoon, the end of a rolling pin, or a meat pounder. Also, if you are making a lot of sauerkraut or have sensitive hands, you may not want to have your hands irritated by the salty brine.
19. **Funnel.** One of my readers shared how useful a canning funnel has been for filling her jars.



SUBMERGE & SEAL: Hold Ferment Below the Brine

20. **Floaties Trap.** If you forgot to save a few cabbage leaves for your Floaties Trap, sift through your cabbage scraps and see if you can retrieve some. If that doesn't pan out, a piece of parchment paper, cut to size, works well. Wax paper should also do the trick.
21. **Other ideas for a Weight?** If don't have access to the small "jelly" jar for a weight, search your house for other small jars: a shot glass or perhaps a small mushroom jar. Some use a clean rock. You can also use a food-grade freezer bags filled with salt water (**1 tablespoon salt to 2 cups water**). More ideas in [Fermentation Weights: Keep Your Ferment Below the Brine](#).
22. **If there is not enough brine** to cover your packed cabbage mixture by 1 inch, go ahead and put the lid on your jar and check it the next day. If there is still not enough brine, dissolve **1 tablespoon salt in 2 cups water** and pour this in.



FERMENT: Ferment for 1-4 Weeks @ 65-75°F (18-23°C)

23. **If the brine in your jar seems to suddenly disappear**, don't panic. This is due to a few things. Cooler temperatures can pull the brine back into the sauerkraut. When the house warms up, brine levels usually rise again. Atmospheric pressure will also affect brine levels.



24. **Should the brine level fall** (very unlikely) and remain below the level of the sauerkraut during the first week, dilute 1 tablespoon of salt in 2 cups of water and pour some of this brine over the sauerkraut (removing the little jar first) until it just covers the mixture. Put the little jar back in, screw the lid on lightly and let the fermentation continue.

25. **To protect your kitchen counter and save cleaning up a mess**, be sure to keep your fermenting jar in a shallow dish of some sort.

26. **Don't worry if the brine disappears after the 7- to 10-day mark.** By this time, you've created a safe environment in which the bacteria that would cause mold or slime has been chased away by the beneficial bacteria produced during the fermentation process. I'm finding that there can be so many air bubbles mixed in with the fermenting sauerkraut that it expands, making it look like there is no brine. Pushing down on the weight, sliding a butter knife along the inside of the jar or poking the sauerkraut with a bamboo skewer will release all the air bubbles and allow the sauerkraut to condense back down into the jar and brine to recover the top of it.



27. **Music and Bubbles.** You will hear an occasional fizzy sound from air escaping the jar. This is normal, and is caused by carbon dioxide escaping the jar. It is one sign that fermentation is happening.

STORE: Store in Refrigerator for Up to 1 Year

28. **The ideal temperature at which to store sauerkraut** is 35-38°F (2-3°C) which happens to be the typical temperature of a refrigerator. With these temperatures, you won't notice much change in the texture over a 12-month period, the typical storage length for sauerkraut. If you store your sauerkraut in a cool basement 55°F (12.7°C), you will notice your sauerkraut getting softer as the months progress.

29. **Not enough room in your refrigerator?** Consider a second refrigerator - even a small dormitory-sized one - if you have a place for it.



30. **Clean up your refrigerator.** Doing so makes for a less-expensive solution. There is more room in there than you realize. Toss out old or moldy mystery jars and organize. With today's deeper refrigerators you'll find a goldmine of space at the back side. This is where I can store 7-10 jars of sauerkraut.

31. **Canning is not recommended** for fermented foods. The high heat destroys most, if not all, of the beneficial bacteria.

32. **Refrigerated jar of sauerkraut looks dry.** You may notice that there is not always brine covering your jars of sauerkraut in the refrigerator. This leaves the top portion of your sauerkraut exposed to air and possible loss of nutrients. I notice this happens when the sauerkraut is cold, as it seems to contract and "drink" up all the brine. You may add more brine as I used to, but I found it dilutes the flavors I work so hard to create

ENJOY! ENJOY! ENJOY! ENJOY! ENJOY!



33. **Keep it simple.** You can come up with all sorts of creative ways to eat sauerkraut, but the simplest is either as a condiment with your meal or mixed into a salad. You'll find it quite easy to raise the bar on your meals when you have flavorful sauerkraut on hand.

34. **Serve straight from the jar.** Place a couple jars of sauerkraut on the table and let each member of your family use their clean fork to put some of their favorite sauerkraut on their plate. If you're lucky enough to still have brine when you get to the bottom of the jar, drink it's probiotic-rich goodness or pour it into another finished ferment in your fridge.

35. **Don't like to eat cold sauerkraut?** Either remember to remove it from the refrigerator an hour before the meal, or at the beginning of your meal place it on your plate and give it some time to come to room temperature. Placing it on top of a warm dish is another way to take the chill out.

36. **Eat your probiotic-rich sauerkraut within a year.** If properly fermented, it can last much longer, but you'll start to see browning in the top layer of the jar, especially with sauerkraut containing beets. This browning indicates loss of vitamins; mainly Vitamin C.

37. **Enjoy the subtle health benefits.** Improved digestion, better energy and a stronger immune system can all be yours as you nourish your body with sauerkraut, the fermented foods Superstar.

38. **If this is the first time for you to eat sauerkraut,** go slow especially if you have compromised digestion. You can start with just a sip or two of the brine and then move on to eating a small bite of the sauerkraut watching for symptoms. Take about a month to work your way up to two small (1/4 cup) servings per day.

39. **Experiencing gas, diarrhea or other digestive symptoms?** Most likely, you've introduced more bacteria and fiber into your diet than your body could handle. See the previous tip and scale back on your consumption.

40. **Salty sauerkraut?** The type of salt you use will determine how salty your finished sauerkraut tastes. I use Himalayan Pink Salt in all my recipes. Himalayan Pink Salt - and Real Salt - are mineral-rich salts that contain 84% sodium chloride; commercial table salt contains 98% sodium chloride. The sodium content of mineral-rich salts still creates the proper brine for a safe ferment but with a greater depth of flavor and less salty taste to the finished product than table salt.

