



Oregon State University Extension Service

## Small Batch Sauerkraut Tips

Sauerkraut is made from thinly shredded cabbage or a combination of cabbage and other vegetables that is salted and then fermented in its own juice. The first sauerkraut was made in China, about 2,000 years ago, during the building of the Great Wall. However the Germans are probably best known for their kraut making skills. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they perfected the process of mixing salt and cabbage and allowing it to ferment. This process is still used today to make kraut around the world.

Making small batches of sauerkraut in quart, half gallon, and gallon jars has become popular. There are also many gadgets and kits on the market today to make kraut easy and fun. Kraut made in small batches ferments much more quickly than in the huge crocks from the past. It can be made, fermented and then, refrigerated and eaten, while another batch ferments.

### Sauerkraut Recipe Conversion for Smaller Quantities

BASIC RECIPE		
1-quart wide-mouth jar	½ gallon wide-mouth jar	1-Gallon Jar
1 ¼ pounds Cabbage	2 ½ pounds Cabbage	5 pounds Cabbage
2 ¼ teaspoons Pickling Salt	4 ½ teaspoons Pickling Salt	3 Tbls. pickling Salt

Select mature, firm heads of cabbage. The best kraut is made from the mid to late season cabbage crop. However, you can make kraut year-round from cabbage purchased at the supermarket. When making kraut from fresh-picked cabbage, it is best to wait 1-2 days after harvesting to make the kraut. Kraut can be made from both red and green varieties.

**Variations:** Besides cabbage you can add a small amount of grated carrot, beet, turnip, kale, hot pepper, garlic or juniper berries to your cabbage mixture.

**Instructions:** Remove outer leaves from the cabbage and rinse heads with cold water and drain. Cut the heads in halves or quarters and remove the cores, trim and discard any damaged tissues. Cabbage can be weighed before or after shredding.

Shred or slice cabbage using a sharp knife, kraut cutter, mandolin or food processor. The shreds should be long and thin, about the thickness of a quarter. Once shredded, place cabbage in a large bowl and sprinkle pickling salt evenly over the cabbage. With clean hands (or wear disposable gloves), thoroughly mix the salt into the cabbage. You will notice cabbage will begin to wilt as the salt is mixed in. When all the salt is dissolved and the cabbage is juicy, begin packing the cabbage firmly into the jar. Use your fist or wooden mallet to firmly and evenly press the cabbage into the jar. As you pack you will notice the juice coming from the cabbage. You will need enough juice to cover the cabbage. It is important to leave at least 3-4 inches of head space between the cabbage and the top of the jar.

Once the jar is adequately filled and the juice is covering the cabbage you are ready to put a weight on the kraut to keep the liquid covering the cabbage during the fermentation period. The weight can be a purchased food grade glass disk, stainless steel spring, or a small freezer-weight plastic bag filled with brine\* that fits into the jar. Be sure to wipe the



edges of the jar before putting the weight on top. Then, place the fermenting lid and screw band on top of the jar and set in a warm location to ferment. **PLEASE NOTE:** If you are using a brine bag as a weight, you don't need the lid on top.

**\*Brine Recipe** (if needed): 1 1/8 teaspoon salt to 1 cup hot water. Cool before use. (To be used if cabbage does not produce enough juice to cover all solids in the jar or to fill plastic bag if it is used for a weight).

**Fermentation Temperature and Management** - Store at 70-75°F while fermenting. At temperatures between 70-75°F sauerkraut will be fully fermented in about 1-2 weeks; at 60-65°F fermentation may take 2-3 weeks. Temperatures lower than 60°F sauerkraut may not ferment. Above 75°F sauerkraut may become soft. The smaller the fermenting container, the faster it will ferment. Small batch kraut ferments quickly so check it daily. A good test to see if kraut is ready is to smell and taste it. It should smell and taste like kraut not sour or salted cabbage. The cabbage should remain firm, not soft and slimy. It also should smell like kraut, not wine. When the kraut taste is to your liking it is time to stop the fermentation and it is ready to eat.

**Preserving Kraut** - Fully fermented sauerkraut may be kept tightly covered in the refrigerator for several months or it may be canned or frozen for long term storage. Tip: If storing in refrigerator remove the fermentation lid and replace with a plastic lid to prevent off-odor in your refrigerator.

#### **Canning Instructions (Can plain sauerkraut only)**

- **Hot Pack:** Bring sauerkraut and liquid slowly to a boil in a large kettle, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and fill jars rather firmly with sauerkraut and juices, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process. (See time below.)
- **Raw Pack:** Fill jars firmly with cold sauerkraut, and cover with juices, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process. (See time below.)

#### **RECOMMENDED PROCESSING TIME FOR SAUERKRAUT –In Boiling Water Canner**

Style of Pack	Jar Size	Processing Time at Altitudes of			
		0-1000 ft.	1001 -3000 ft.	3001 - 6000 ft.	6001 - 8000 ft.
<b>Hot</b>	Pints	10 min	15 min	15 min	20 min
	Quarts	15 min	20 min	20 min	25 min
<b>Raw</b>	Pints	20 min	25 min	30 min	35 min
	Quarts	25 min	30 min	35 min	40 min

**Freezing** - Pack kraut into freezer bags or containers, label and freeze.

#### **Tips**

- Never reduce the salt when making kraut. If the finished product is too salty it can be rinsed in cold water before serving.
- Store canned sauerkraut in a cool, dark place.

**Using Kraut** - Sauerkraut can be served in many ways. It is often eaten with hot dogs and sausages. It can be cooked with chopped tart apples, mash with potatoes, added to chowder, used as a pizza topping and even made into a chocolate cake.

