

Sauerkraut

- Liz Crain, author and Portland Fermentation Festival Founder

About 2 cups

You can scale this recipe up or down easy peasy. Also, feel free to add herbs, spices, and other thinly sliced vegetables to your kraut. I recommend adding a half cup or less of additional ingredients to start and then add a little more salt, just a smidge. Happy kraut making!

2 pounds cored, trimmed and quartered green or red cabbage (about 1 medium-small head)
1 heaping tablespoon kosher salt (a bit less, a scant tablespoon, if you use a finer sea salt or table salt).

1. Using a very sharp knife, cut the cabbage into 1/4-1/8-inch slices, or thinner or thicker if you like. Then chop the cabbage into whatever length of pieces you want. I like bite-sized 1-to-3-inch pieces.
1. In a large bowl, using clean hands, toss the cabbage with the salt for 2 to 3 minutes. Squeeze the cabbage as you do; it should become watery and limp. You can't be too rough with it. Squeeeeeeeze!
1. Pack the sauerkraut very tightly into a nonreactive container with at least a few inches of headspace -- a large, wide 1-quart glass jar works great. If you use a plastic container make sure that it's food grade.
1. Top the cabbage with a plastic bag filled with enough water to push down the cabbage and seal any gaps. You want the fermenting cabbage to be able to bubble and off-gas as it ferments, but you don't want any air in direct contact with it. The water-filled bag serves both purposes; it weighs down the cabbage and seals all of the gaps of the vessel thereby keeping air out and prohibiting any airborne molds from getting into the kraut. Place the jar on top of a plate or bowl in case it overflows as it ferments. It often does.
1. Ferment the sauerkraut at room temperature for a few days to 2 weeks, checking on it every day or so (wiping down the inside of the fermentation vessel with a clean towel if there is any sort of buildup when you do so) and making sure that the cabbage is submerged in the brine. If it is not, it can get moldy. The colder the temperature at which the kraut ferments, the slower it ferments; also, the longer the kraut ferments the more tart and pungent it gets. I like the flavor and crunch of the kraut usually in the 1 to 2 week range, sample it as you go, and once it's to your liking, enjoy!

NOTE: As your kraut ferments you can always add more salt to taste. Stir it into a little water and add it that way or just sprinkle it in directly. It will incorporate throughout eventually if you have a good amount of brine.

1. Store your kraut submerged in the brine in a lidded glass container in the refrigerator for up to 2 months. It will keep much longer than that but it becomes less vibrant and less yummy.

