

Fermented Foods: Sauerkraut ¹

United States Department of Agriculture, Extension Service²

Sauerkraut

25 lbs cabbage

3/4 cup canning or pickling salt

Quality: For the best sauerkraut, use firm heads of fresh cabbage. Shred cabbage and start kraut between 24 and 48 hours after harvest.

Yield: About 9 quarts

Procedure: Work with about 5 pounds of cabbage at a time. Discard outer leaves. Rinse heads under cold running water and drain. Cut heads in quarters and remove cores. Shred or slice to a thickness of a quarter. Put cabbage in a suitable fermentation container, see "Suitable Containers, Covers, and Weights for Fermenting Food," (FCS 8221), and add 3 tablespoons of salt. Mix thoroughly, using clean hands. Pack firmly until salt draws juices from cabbage. Repeat shredding, salting, and packing until all cabbage is in the container. Be sure it is deep enough so that its rim is at least 4 or 5 inches above the cabbage. If juice does not cover cabbage, add boiled and cooled brine (1-1/2 tablespoons of salt per quart of water). Add plate and

weights; cover container with a clean bath towel.

Store at 70 degrees to 75 degrees F while fermenting. At temperatures between 70 degrees and 75 degrees F, kraut will be fully fermented in about 3 to 4 weeks; at 60 degrees to 65 degrees F, fermentation may take 5 to 6 weeks. At temperatures lower than 60 degrees F, kraut may not ferment. Above 75 degrees F, kraut may become soft.

If you weigh the cabbage down with a brine-filled bag, do not disturb the crock until normal fermentation is completed (when bubbling ceases). If you use jars as weight, you will have to check the kraut 2 to 3 times each week and remove scum if it forms. Fully fermented kraut may be kept tightly covered in the refrigerator for several months or it may be canned as follows:

Hot pack -- Bring kraut and liquid slowly to a boil in a large kettle, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and fill jars rather firmly with kraut and juices, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.

Raw pack -- Fill jars firmly with kraut and cover with juices, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.

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Adjust lids and process according to the recommendations in Table 1.

Table 1.

Table 1. Recommended process time for Sauerkraut in a boiling-water canner.					
		Process Time at Altitudes of			
Style of Pack	Jar Size	0-1,000 ft	1,001-3,000 ft	3,001-6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
Hot	Pints	10 min	15	15	20
	Quarts	15	20	20	25
Raw	Pints	20	25	30	35
	Quarts	25	30	35	40

*After the process is complete, turn off the heat and remove the canner lid. Wait five minutes before removing jars.