

# The Essentialist

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Three recipes are provided. They are basically the same, but the first recipe makes a smaller batch. The second recipe provides a lot more information to describe the process. The third is the same as the second, except it offers an interesting alternative to using a crock.

See Pickling and Lacto-Fermentation flyer for sources of crocks, wooden lids (for crocks) and wooden pounders; and also for recommended books. Perhaps the best book is *Wild Fermentation* by Sandor Katz

## **Sauerkraut I**

This recipe is from *Nourishing Traditions* (see below for sources), and makes 1 quart. It can be eaten after curing 3 days at room temperature, but taste improves with age (in cold storage). Great if you only want to make a small batch.

### **Ingredients & Equipment:**

- 1 medium cabbage, cored & shredded
- 1 Tbsp caraway seeds (optional)
- 1 Tbsp unrefined sea salt
- 4 Tbsp whey \*
- wooden pounder (or meat hammer)
- quart-size wide-mouth canning jar, with lid

### **Process:**

1. Mix cabbage, caraway seeds, salt and whey in a large bowl. Pound about 10 minutes with pounder to release juices.
2. Place in jar; press down firmly with pounder, until juices come to top of the cabbage. Do not fill more than 1 inch below the top of the jar.
3. Cover tightly; keep at room temperature about 3 days (to taste); then transfer to cold storage.


\*NOTE about whey: Do not use powdered sweet dairy whey, nor whey protein powder. Rather, allow liquid whey to drain from cultured milk products (from cow, goat or sheep milk) such as yogurt.

[*Nourishing Traditions*, by Sally Fallon, with Mary G. Enig PhD., can be special-ordered at Books West in Kalispell 752-6900 (\$25.00), or ordered online from the publisher ([www.newtrendspublishing.com/SallyFallon/](http://www.newtrendspublishing.com/SallyFallon/)) or Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))]

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## **Sauerkraut II**

This recipe is from Melanie's demonstration (adapted from the Ball Canning Book). Here are some notes:

- ▶ **What kind of cabbage?** It should be the hard head type of cabbage, red or green. Fall cabbage produces the best product; Flat Dutch is a good green variety. Red cabbage is thicker and more difficult to get the liquid to release, so be sure to grate as thin as possible if using red cabbage.
  - ▶ **Shredder?** The easiest to use is a kraut board, similar to a French mandoline (no, not a mandolin stringed instrument). A kraut board is typically made of wood, with steel blades, and a wood box to hold your cabbage while grating. You can use a vegetable shredder or a food processor for smaller batches, or a knife.
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- The image shows a wooden kraut board, which is a rectangular wooden box with a metal blade (grater) attached to the top. It is used for shredding cabbage.
- ▶ **How much salt?** 3 Tbsp salt per 5 pounds cabbage.
  - ▶ **Kind of salt?** Unrefined sea salt is recommended. It has valuable trace nutrients, is not pure white nor free flowing. Most commercial 'sea salt' is highly processed pure white sodium chloride derived from sea water. Celtic or Lima Sea Salt (available at natural food stores) are excellent. DO NOT USE IODIZED SALT.
  - ▶ **Why whey?** While it is optional, it is recommended because it helps prevent mold, and inoculates the brine with good bacteria to further the fermentation process, and adds nutrients. Do not use powdered sweet dairy whey, nor whey protein powder. Rather, allow liquid whey to drain from cultured milk products such as yogurt (from cow, goat or sheep milk). Vinegar can also be used, but whey is better.
  - ▶ **Stoneware crock?** Melanie's grandmother says Red Wing crocks are the best, but any good quality stoneware crock (no lead glaze) will work. Or, for smaller batches, use a canning jar (half-gallon is a good size). Do not use metal; plastic is not recommended because it can leach chemicals into the brine.
  - ▶ **Cheesecloth?** Melanie recommends covering your brine with a piece of cheesecloth before covering with a lid. This helps in removal of the white scum that may collect at the top. Grocery-store variety cheesecloth is not the best kind. Get real cheese-makers cloth, or white cotton drapery scrim.
  - ▶ **Lid?** Melanie uses a dinner plate that just fits inside your crock, upside down, with a heavy clean stone for a weight. Or you could use a wooden lid made to fit your crock, and a heavy clean stone for a weight.
  - ▶ **Fermentation time?** This varies greatly, mostly depending on temperature. The easiest way to know when it's done is to taste it. Throw out anything that tastes moldy, tastes bad, or turns a strange color!

### **RULES:**

- ▶ Always use fall cabbage
- ▶ Do not use iodized salt.

**Ingredients & Equipment:**

- green or red cabbage
- unrefined sea salt
- liquid whey (optional)
- grater or good knife
- cheesecloth
- crock
- lid and stone for crock

\* NOTE about whey: Do not use powdered sweet dairy whey, nor whey protein powder. Rather, allow liquid whey to drain from cultured milk products such as yogurt.

**Procedure:**

1. Wash your hands!
2. Grate 5 pounds of cabbage into large bowl. Organically grown cabbage is better. Other vegetables like carrots, beets, or garlic may be added. A fine grate is preferred (less than 1/8 inch thick).
3. Add 3 Tbsp salt, and work it into the cabbage with your hands (or a pounder), to draw juice out of the cabbage, and stave off spoilage.
4. Add a bit of liquid whey if desired (1-2 teaspoons).
5. Put the cabbage-salt mixture into the crock, and pound with your hand or a wooden pounder, until liquid covers (or nearly covers) the cabbage
6. Grate another 5 pounds cabbage, mix in 3 Tbsp salt with your hands, transfer to crock, and pound until covered with liquid. If not getting enough liquid to cover, add a bit of water.
7. Repeat in 5-pound batches, until the crock is about 3/4 full, or until you have used all your cabbage, whichever comes first. Add 3 Tbsp salt to each batch. And add a bit of liquid whey to each layer, if desired.
8. When you're done, the crock should be roughly three quarters full. It's good to err on the side of making too much cabbage and then you can just eat what doesn't fit.
9. Cover cabbage with cheesecloth, then place "lid" over the top. The lid can be a dinner plate, or a round piece of wood cut to fit your crock. Then place a heavy stone on top of the lid, to weight down the cabbage.  
  
The lid should be sized just to fit into the crock, leaving a very thin air gap. And the weight should be heavy enough to keep the cabbage submerged in the liquid (even as it rises with air bubbles), yet not so heavy the liquid leaks out. You also need to allow air to get out, yet stop mold spores from falling in. Getting the right lid and the right weight is the trickiest part of the process.  
  
For another method, using a large jar fitted with a smaller jar as a lid, see Sauerkraut III (next recipe).
10. Put the whole thing in a dark place at a temperature around 70F (21C). Too warm and it can get soft and spoil, too cold and it will ferment very slowly or not at all. Now check it at least once a day.
11. Each day, rinse cheesecloth, lid, and stone, then replace on top of kraut.
12. When it's done, remove weight, lid and cheesecloth and transfer to quart or pint canning jars. Be sure to wipe the rims to remove any traces of salt, then place lid on top and secure with ring. Place in refrigerator to stop fermentation. If you don't have a refrigerator, keep it in a cool place, and eat it as long as it tastes good.
13. Or can the kraut using hot-bath method, processing 20 minutes.

### **Sauerkraut III**

This recipe is from the public domain (author unknown). Here are some notes on the fermenting container and lid:

- ▶ **Big jar?** Select a jar with a little bit of a neck that is smaller than the main part of the jar (helps to keep mold spores out), such as a gallon or half-gallon wide mouth jar.
- ▶ **'Carefully selected' smaller jar?** What you want is a jar that will just fit through the opening of the larger jar, with only a millimeter or less, to spare.

#### **Ingredients & Equipment:**

- green or red cabbage
- unrefined sea salt
- vinegar or liquid whey (optional)
- grater or good knife
- big jar
- 'carefully selected' smaller jar
- large bowl

#### **Procedure:**

1. Wash your hands!
2. Prepare cabbage and salt as in Sauerkraut II, using one or two 5-pound batches as needed to fill the larger jar (instead of a crock). It should be roughly three quarters full. It's good to err on the side of making too much cabbage and then you can just eat what doesn't fit.
3. Here's the tricky part that makes this recipe "easy". You need to keep all the cabbage below the level of the juice, even as it rises with air bubbles. You also need to allow air to get out, yet

stop mold spores from falling in. You could put layers of cabbage leaves on top, which would be sacrificed to the bad microbes, or a piece of cheesecloth, followed by a plate or lid and some kind of weight. The problem is that the weight would be too heavy at the beginning of fermentation and too light at the end.

So the author recommends using a smaller jar that just fits into the opening of the big jar (see above). Then pour water into the smaller jar to give it enough weight to hold the cabbage below the level of the juice, but not so much weight that the juice overflows. Put the assembled jars into the bowl, to catch any overflow during fermentation. Adjust amount of water in the smaller jar as needed.

4. Put the whole thing in a dark place at a temperature around 70F (21C). Too warm and it can get soft and spoil, too cold and it will ferment very slowly or not at all. Now check it at least once a day.

You want the juice level to stay in the neck of the big jar, without going so low that cabbage is exposed to air, or so high that it overflows. Generally the way you do this is by gradually adding water/weight to the small jar, to balance the force of fermentation, and maybe pushing it down sometimes to squeeze bubbles out. It sounds complicated, but in practice it's easy to figure out what to do if you keep in mind that the juice level should stay above the cabbage but below the rim of the big jar. If you want to be safer, intentionally push down and overflow a bit of juice every day, which will flush out any contaminants on the surface.

5. When it's done, remove smaller jar and put lid on the larger jar. Or transfer to several smaller lidded jars. Place in refrigerator to stop fermentation. If you don't have a refrigerator, keep it in a cool place, and eat it as long as it tastes good.