

# Fermented Food

with Alana Holloway

**Liz Earle**  
*Wellbeing*



## **You take your gut care to another level!**

Yes, I'm a bit of a geek when it comes to fermented food, gut health and gut bacteria. I'm not a scientist, I'm a foodie, and I really do approach it from that angle, but yes, I am quite obsessed.

You had an issue with eczema. Was that instrumental in you starting your brand?

Absolutely. I have suffered with it on and off throughout my life and in my early twenties I developed something called topical steroid addiction which is a side effect of using the steroids prescribed to treat eczema. When you develop that it attacks your whole body, including your gut. It throws your bacteria off and inflammation is rife. It was a stressful time and of course all anybody medical wanted to do was to prescribe me more antibiotics. This is the time I became obsessed with food and health and started reading more about the gut and thought I'd give it a go. I started with sourdough and sauerkraut and tried to get that into my diet everyday. I started to notice tiny things, things only I could notice, but I saw progress. I felt like I'd struck gold. I was telling anybody who would listen and that's where it all started. There are really negative connotations around things like sauerkraut – people just think it's smelly – but I'm evangelical about it now.

## **Tell me about your products? What's in your recipes?**

In sauerkraut, the salt draws the liquid from the cabbage which makes the brine. You leave it for ten days to two weeks, but this is very dependent on the weather which can really speed up the process. Knowing it's ready is very much a sensory thing – it's about looking, smelling, the texture, and the taste. You keep it at room temperature, somewhere between 16 and 22 degrees – if you're comfortable, it will be comfortable. It's an anaerobic ferment, which means it doesn't need oxygen to ferment and you can 'burp the jar' which will prevent any explosions! Although I have to say I have never had one in all the time I have been doing it. High sugar foods (it doesn't just have to be cabbage) such as beetroot, create more carbon dioxide which will make a greater build-up of gas. The growth of the good bacteria will prevent the bad bacteria from growing so that's not something you need to worry about. There is a fab saying, 'submerge in brine and all will be fine', so if you submerged your cabbage it's not going to go off, it will ferment. Just like in your gut, if you've got enough good bacteria, the bad bacteria won't be present.

Kimchi is a Korean pickle, but I like to make all my things seasonal and British. People used to ferment what they had an abundance of after harvest and I don't see the point of going far a wide to hunt down traditional Korean kimchi. I use British ingredients, such as a radish, carrot, pear, spring onion, garlic. I eat it as a side dish, mixed into a stir fry, or used in a bone broth.

## **Tell me about kavass. That's something I am yet to make myself.**

I love kavass. It started as a rye bread ferment in central Europe. They would take some stale rye bread, place it in water and it would almost make a beer. I don't make that one. I make two types: there's a sour kavass which is beetroot, salt and water and makes a great morning shot. I also make what's called a honey kavass which is made with raw honey that you add fruit to – that's a two-to-three day ferment. I would describe them as slightly fizzy, not very sweet, lemonade type drinks. They do contain a tiny amount of alcohol which is something to be aware of if you're pregnant.

## **Where do the bacteria and yeast come from?**

One story goes that kefir grains were found in a stream in the mountains. People realised that over time they were making them feel better, and they do multiply so they're a great food source and can also be eaten raw.

(<http://www.fodderandplonk.com/>)