

# Probiotic Foods: Top 13

## Natural Probiotic Foods

Our digestive tract is inhabited by trillions of good and bad bacteria. Fermented foods contain both prebiotic fibers that feed our good (and sometimes not so good) bacteria and probiotics – the good kind of bacteria. Fermented foods promote the growth of beneficial bacteria in the intestines. Some are easy to make and others are easier to buy. But be careful with some of these foods if you suffer from SIBO (Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth) or SIFO (Small Intestinal Fungal Overgrowth). Sometimes, you need to get some other dietary adjustments (such as Low-FODMAP diet and antimicrobial herbs) before you are able to tolerate fermented foods. Here is a list of the top 13 natural probiotics I use in my everyday life.

### Dark Chocolate

Fermentation is the first and very important stage in the processing of cocoa beans. Nutritionists recommend choosing raw chocolate, which contains at least 70% cocoa. It is not only tasty but also contains probiotics and is good for the digestive system. In addition, chocolate improves concentration and memory. It also contains epicatechin – a very strong antioxidant.

### Plain Live Yogurt



You can buy or make yourself yogurt from whole milk or from coconut milk. Yogurts with preservatives, additives, and high sugar content are the least helpful. It is best to cook yogurt yourself from raw milk and live cultures such as Lactobacilli or Bifidobacteria or buy yogurts with a short shelf life. Such products are saturated with bifidobacteria and rich in lactic acid. Yogurt helps to improve digestion and decrease symptoms of IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome).

## **Kombucha**

Kombucha is a sweet-and-sour effervescent drink that contains beneficial bacteria. In Russia, it is better known as “Tea Mushroom”. It can be prepared using tea rich in tannins, cane sugar, and tea mushroom itself – a symbiosis of yeast and beneficial probiotic bacteria. Kombucha is famous for its efficacy against Candida or other yeast overgrowths as it balances the intestinal microbiome, combats bloating and excessive gas formation. It also helps to cope with stress and

anxiety, perhaps, due to the fact that over 90% of serotonin is made in the gut, not in the brain. Leaky gut may lead to the leaky brain.

## **Salted Pickles**

Yes, it turns out, they also have a benefit: salted pickles restore the intestinal flora, improve immunity, and improve digestion. My favorite brand is Bubbie's Pickles. You can find them in the refrigerated section of most health food stores. I have attempted making my own salted pickles, but I succeeded only once. If you want to try making your own salted pickles, make sure you buy them from a local farmer's market, as they are now treated with a waxy layer to preserve freshness and you have the highest chance to succeed!

## **Sauerkraut**



Sauerkraut is very easy to make! [See my “Ukrainian Sauerkraut” Recipe here.](#) Sauerkraut is a superfood. Probiotics, contained in sauerkraut, effectively fight candida overgrowth and eczema. Fermented cabbage contains lactic acid, rich in vitamins A, C, B, E, K, and mineral salts (potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, iron).

## **Raw Cheese**

A great source of natural probiotics. However, the food industry is convinced that it is better not to risk it: unpasteurized (raw) cheese may not be safe. Unfortunately, these risks are present even when we buy triple-washed salad from our local Costco! Again and again one hears about E.Coli found in spinach or iceberg lettuce. So, be careful while buying raw cheese, but at the same time, it is impossible to

protect ourselves from the evils of industrialized agriculture. Well, not unless you farm or grow everything you eat or drink.

## **Kefir grains**

Kefir is fermented milk or coconut water drink produced as a result of the joint work of bacteria and yeast. Kefir grains are a combination of lactic acid bacteria and yeast, fermenting the lactose (milk sugar) or any other type of sugar. In the case of milk-based kefir, the use of kefir improves lactose absorption and, in general, the work of the digestive system. Kefir-containing probiotics are very good for the skin. You can also make it yourself (if you have kefir grains). When I have a chance, I make coconut water-based kefir, because it is fizzy and refreshing, especially during the long Arizona summer.

## **Spirulina**

Spirulina promotes the growth of bifidobacteria and lactobacilli in the intestines. This blue-green unicellular alga of the genus cyanobacteria is an excellent anti-inflammatory agent. Spirulina contains antioxidants and cholesterol regulating proteins. It fights fatigue, is useful in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases.

## **Olives**

Excellent fermented snack, if no vinegar is used to ferment them.

## **Miso**

Miso is a product of fermentation of soybeans, rice, and barley. It is widely used in Japanese cuisine. According to studies, probiotics from miso help with bloating and Crohn's disease, and also reduce the risk of stroke.

## **Kimchi**

A spicy dish from the Korean cuisine, which is made from the fermented vegetables, primarily Napa cabbage. Kimchi improves digestion and reduces the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.

## **Tempe**

This is a fermented dish made from soybeans, popular in Indonesia and other countries of Southeast Asia. It contains dietary fiber, vegetable protein, and probiotics.

## **Lassie**

Lassie is an Indian fermented milk drink. It helps to decrease constipation or diarrhea. It is customary to mix it with fruits and spices and serve before dinner. Preparing lassi on the basis of yogurt with the addition of milk or water, salt, sugar, spices, fruit, ice by blending.