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MODULE 1 | TRANSCRIPT | LESSON 1

Everyday Fermented Foods Overview

If you've taken our bread courses and made a yeasted or sourdough bread, you've used fermentation to prepare a food. Other fermented foods that you may be familiar with include sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha, miso, kefir, yogurt, vinegar, pu-erh tea, cheeses, tofu, tempeh, soy sauce, beer, wine, coconut aminos, cider, coffee, even chocolate.

So, what is fermentation?

In the simplest terms, fermentation is a metabolic process of microorganisms. See, bacteria and yeasts eat sugars in food sources like vegetables and grains, and in the process of eating, they convert the sugars into acids, gases, and/or alcohol. This microscopic feasting is fermentation and this process results in fermented foods like sauerkraut, kombucha, and sourdough.

Microbes responsible for fermenting foods are commonly known as probiotics or beneficial (or friendly) bacteria and yeasts. You've likely heard about the microbiome, healthy gut bacteria, and the importance of probiotics for health. While fermentation techniques may be relatively new or foreign to many of us, the wisdom of fermentation is a way of life for many cultures around the world. And it has been for most of human history. Fermentation is a lesson in balance, attention, trust, patience, and living in harmony on a macro and micro level.

Microorganisms make up a lot of who we are. According to the *NIH Human Microbiome Project*, the human body contains trillions of microorganisms—outnumbering human cells by 10 to 1. Because of their small size, however, microorganisms make up only about 1 to 3 percent of the body's mass (in a 200-pound adult, that's 2 to 6 pounds of bacteria), but they dominate and play a vital role in human health.

The process of fermentation can help us break down foods into bioavailable nutrients, readily available for assimilation. Fermented foods can also contribute to microbiome diversity, they can preserve foods, and over time they help foods develop nuanced flavor that tastes incredible. Fermentation can bring out the best of many ingredients, and it can get better and better over time.

In this course, we're just scratching the surface of fermentation to help you get started. You'll build confidence in the process. You'll use simple methods and existing cultures like a probiotic capsule. You'll also cultivate microorganisms that live in the air around us and already on the ingredients. Consider this course dipping your pinky toe into the pool. You'll learn some fun everyday recipes, some cool techniques, and you'll gain trust and confidence in the process, so you can run with it all for years to come.

Many folks who start fermenting at home become so interested that they have crocks and bubbling concoctions all over the house in no time—call it an obsession. It's a lot like witnessing and cultivating a little magic. But it's ok if you only want to make a fermented food every now and then too. We highly, highly recommend that you purchase the books listed in the modules to help you on your journey, big or small. They make this ancient and far-reaching process inspiring and doable.

In the following modules, you'll practice making simple kitchen staples like ketchup, butter, and fermented veggies. Be sure to read all of the information and resources provided within the modules and within each recipe *before* you practice a recipe. It's imperative for success that you know what to expect *before* you begin. As you practice each recipe, you'll become familiar with techniques that you can hone and evolve into your own creations. Keep a fermentation journal to track your experiments and discoveries—build a fermentation roadmap.

These processes are not proprietary, they have been shared, tweaked, and passed down for generations by various cultures. We're doing the same and we hope you do the same. Fermentation originated in nature, by nature, partially for our benefit—to share, to preserve, to be creative with, and to find flavor and abundant health. You're now part of a ripple effect.

Each and every body is different, and we all come to the table as hosts to varied microbiomes, immunity, history, traditions, and food sensitivities. When consuming fermented foods, start with a little bit and listen to how you feel. For example, some folks can drink an entire kombucha while others

feel better drinking a few sips per day. Some gluten-sensitive people can eat a wheat sourdough no problem because the yeasts have predigested/fermented the grains, while others have to stick to gluten-free sourdough for a while, or forever. Listen to what your body wants. Document findings and experiences in your fermentation journal and adjust as necessary—have fun with it all.

Fermentation is a creative, wide world of possibilities that are primal and alive, and you've just cracked open the door.

Happy fermenting...