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Sourdough Difference 02

Never Underestimate Naturally Fermented Foods

Our overzealous strife for domination and to control every aspect of our former natural fermented foods has had deep and far reaching consequences that are surfacing today. Only in the past 100 years have these changes occurred and we are at the brink of epidemic food allergies. It is time to backtrack and prepare and eat foods the way our ancestors relied upon for 10 000 years and more.

It is always amazing to witness fermentation, no matter what kind. Our ancestors were just as astonished and fascinated. Fermentation was revered as a sacred practice since the dawn of civilization. Through fermentation, mysterious transformations seem to create one substance from another: wine from grape juice, beer from barley, bread from wheat, cheese from milk, and miso from soy. Not only did it convert raw food materials into edible food products, but it also helped preserve them and enhance their nutrition. These transformations, though some took only hours, could **not** be witnessed in the true sense of the word, since everything occurred at the microscopic level; our ancestors could only see the overall end product. Naturally fermented foods were an intricate part of every culture that ever existed on this planet. Modern versions of these foods are still around, but the new science of microbiology and from there the chemical industry that plays such a huge part in modern food making, has had drastic impacts on these traditional foods. From synthetic acids to preservatives and raw chemicals, the Industrial Revolution completely changed some of our most dear foods of the past into, accurately named the Frankenstein foods of today.

The unseen or microscopic world is still one of the most unexplored worlds according to microbiologists. It is our limited imagination when it comes to either the Universe with its stars and galaxies or the unseen micro universe of cells and atoms. Distant stars and the Milky Way Galaxy are sometimes observable without the aid of a telescope, but when it comes to the small, we need magnification in the way of microscopes, to which few of us have access. On the space that the dot, or period at the end of this sentence occupies, there is room enough for thousands (yes, that is plural) of bacteria, if you can imagine that. I don't think that any human has the capability to imagine this properly, but the microscope is proving these facts.

For most people bacteria and viruses have a rather bad connotation because of visits to the doctor for one ailment or another. It is generally a negative experience because 'they' are the enemy and need to be killed, usually by way of antibiotics or disinfectant. But there are actually far more beneficial bacteria than there are bad ones. Only in the past few years has it been truly recognized how our digestive system really works and that without the good bacteria thriving there, there wouldn't be any digestion and therefore no life. Our entire existence directly depends on the friendly bacteria, which help us convert the foods we eat into usable, absorbable micronutrients. Everything we eat is broken down to its individual makeup of amino acids (proteins), vitamins, carbohydrates (simple and complex), fats, and more by these ever present inhabitants of our digestive system.

The fact that health starts in the colon is becoming more and more generally known. The question is, "How can we influence or contribute to a healthy gut flora?" Antibiotics kill the bacteria in our bodies, and the opposite, probiotics, encourage them to flourish. Probiotics have become a market segment of the health food industry today, usually as a mix of different bacteria and enzymes to mimic natural bacteria in the intestine via some form of pill or another. Naturally fermented foods provide the right type of bacteria and enzymes for the specific foods eaten at the time as required, which makes these foods easier to digest properly. Digestion begins before the food is eaten, and continues as it is further broken down in usable nutrients and absorbed in our bloodstream. There is a huge array of supplements available for the reestablishment of beneficial bacteria in the colon, but as the word 'supplement' already indicates, it is an addition to the amount of something, or to make up for a deficiency. Food supplements and vitamins are substances with particular nutritional values taken to make up for a real or supposed deficiency in our diet. However, whole foods grown and fermented naturally were the staple of our ancestors, who managed for thousands of years without any digestive problems. Evolution is slow, and the adaptation of our digestive systems to artificial modern foods is failing. Numerous gastrointestinal disorders are setting the stage for serious health problems and are sharply on the rise. Natural fermentation processes need to be adhered to as in Sourdough Bread, and only then can good digestion occur. This is a key factor when consuming any grains, especially gluten containing grains like wheat, barley, rye, spelt.

Our ancestors naturally fermented food out of necessity; there simply wasn't any other way. Modern technology provides the means and tools for the entrepreneurial spirit to explore radical, ever new foods that all lack this most important factor. If anything these new discoveries show quite clearly how intricate the natural world really is and how interdependent we all are on each other and that we are ourselves an intricate part of this world. Isolation or pretending to be above or outside of it invites disastrous repercussions. Another example of trouble due to modern practices of food production is the sterilization or pasteurization of milk which has resulted in a major problem today. Inoculating milk with specific strains of bacteria after pasteurization does not replace naturally occurring bacteria and enzymes killed during this process, and rather, offer limited aid in its digestion. The end result is intolerance, allergy, and even disease to and from the mal-digestion of dairy products.

Modern breads lack all natural fermentation. Instead of live bacteria and enzymes acting upon the grain or flour, derivative synthetic acids in the way of 'dough conditions' and a multitude of other chemicals additives are used for one reason or another, to bust volume oriented manufacturing techniques of the entrepreneur of the 20th and 21st century, but our ever-conceited genius fails to recognize the true essence of correct food preparation. In our high technology age, we have overlooked what is really important in quality foods, and therefore, our health has/is deteriorated.

My advice when it comes to bread, is only eat traditional sourdough bread. It has the bacteria and enzymes that are required for digesting the gluten from the grains used to make the flour incorporated in bread. Any bread made without a natural bacterial sourdough culture is to be avoided. Be aware of breads that are made with 'vital wheat gluten', even if they contain sprouted grains, it is counter productive and in the long run it will be detrimental to your health and the health of your kids. As everyone is witnessing the epidemic outbreaks of dairy and wheat related intolerances, allergies and diseases today, eating quality foods prepared the right way avoids or eliminates these problems. "**Prevention**" is crucial. Can you imagine a world in thirty years where we can no longer use wheat, or drink milk?

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Silvio Lettrari

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June, 2007