

Cultured Food for Health

Donna Schwenk

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This spirited introduction to probiotic eating includes dozens of straightforward recipes.

In *Cultured Food for Health: A Guide to Healing Yourself with Probiotic Foods*, her second book on the topic, Donna Schwenk offers suggestions for how to use the trillions of bacteria in the human gut to full effect. Flavorful recipes start with one of only three cultured ingredients. Step-by-step instructions and information on the potential health benefits of probiotic eating make this a practical handbook.

When Schwenk started eating cultured foods in 2002, she had diabetes, high blood pressure, and a premature newborn. Keen to see if good bacteria could help with her medical problems, she started introducing the “healing powerhouse” of kefir (a fermented milk product resembling thin yogurt), kombucha (bubbly tea), and cultured vegetables into her diet, and soon reaped the rewards. She believes cultured foods can mitigate, if not cure, conditions ranging from irritable bowel syndrome to depression. The endnotes, giving references to scientific journals, prove she has done the research to back up her ideas.

About a quarter of the book is background information about probiotic foods. Bullet-pointed lists of health benefits, along with an alphabetical inventory of the diseases that cultured foods can treat, should prove particularly helpful. The rest of the book is devoted to recipes, most of them vegetarian. Schwenk also gives clear directions for making kefir from a starter culture and submerging vegetables in water for several days to promote fermentation.

From cocktails to soups and salads, these recipes look tasty as well as quick and easy, although a few rely on harder-to-find ingredients like coconut oil, stevia, almond milk, and psyllium husk.

“Trust me; it’s delicious,” Schwenk writes, and for some recipes, it may indeed be a matter of taking it on faith. Still, anyone interested in cutting sugar and incorporating cultured foods into daily life should invest in this essential primer.

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