Sides / Germany

German Sauerkraut

White cabbage and salt — nothing else — massaged until the cabbage surrenders its own brine, then sealed below the surface for weeks while wild bacteria transform it into something sharply sour, deeply funky, and alive with probiotics.

Time 30240 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 1000 g White cabbage (head, outer leaves reserved)
- ☐ 20 g Non-iodized fine sea salt
- ☐ 5 g Caraway seeds (optional)

Let's make it.

01 Remove and reserve the outer leaves (2-3) of the cabbage — these will be used to cover the ferment. Quarter the cabbage, remove the core, and shred as thinly as possible — ideally 2-3mm — using a mandoline or sharp knife. Thin shreds ferment more evenly and have a better final texture than thick chunks. Weigh the shredded cabbage after removing the core and outer leaves.

02 Sprinkle the salt evenly over the shredded cabbage and add the caraway seeds if using. Let the salt rest on the cabbage for 3-5 minutes — you will see moisture beginning to appear. Then massage vigorously with clean hands, squeezing and crushing the cabbage repeatedly. Work the entire mass for 10-15 minutes until the cabbage has released a significant amount of brine — enough to pool in the bottom of the bowl. The cabbage should have wilted to roughly half its original volume.

03 Pack the salted cabbage into a clean 1-liter jar or fermentation crock, one handful at a time, pressing firmly with your fist after each addition to compact it and drive the brine upward. Pour any brine remaining in the bowl over the packed cabbage. Lay the reserved outer leaves flat over the surface to create a physical barrier. Use a weight (a small jar filled with water, a zip-lock bag of brine, or a fermentation weight) to keep everything submerged below the brine. The brine MUST cover all the cabbage — any cabbage exposed to air will not ferment properly. Leave 5cm of headspace.

04 Ferment at room temperature, ideally 18-22°C (65-72°F), for 1-4 weeks. Check daily for the first week: press the cabbage back under the brine, skim any white film from the surface (this is harmless kahm yeast — remove it), and burp any gas buildup. After 3-5 days, tiny bubbles will appear and the brine will go slightly cloudy — fermentation is active. Taste daily from day 7. At 1 week the sauerkraut will be lightly sour and still crunchy. At 2 weeks it develops more complexity. At 3-4 weeks it is deeply sour, complex, and fully mature. Refrigerate when it reaches your preferred flavor, where it will keep for months.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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