**Fermentation**

Healthy fermentation is a process that was used hundreds of years ago to preserve foods and beverages.  The process involves microorganisms like yeast and bacteria which convert sugars and starches to lactic acid and alcohol.  This process not only preserves foods but also aids in digestion.  Healthy fermentation is seen in foods such as miso, sauerkraut, kombucha, yogurt, kefir, and kimchi.

Our gut contains a mix of healthy and unhealthy bacteria. If the balance favors the “bad” bacteria, we develop what is called dysbiosis leading to bloating, constipation, and abdominal discomfort. A gut which favors healthy microorganisms augments our digestive and immune system and leads to healthy digestion without pain and bloating.

Food preparation in most cultures involves fermentation which helps with absorption, digestion, and assimilation of nutrients.  Healthy gut flora and fermentation allow for a boost in our immune system however unhealthy gut microorganisms can lead to inflammation.

Aside from the benefits noted above, phytic acid is a compound that is broken down by fermentation.  If it is present, it can block the absorption of healthy minerals such as iron and zinc.  When it is not present, these minerals are naturally absorbed and are necessary to a healthy immune system.

There is also a link between our gut and our mood. Serotonin, which affects mood, is produced in the gut so a healthy gut can contribute to a healthy mind.  Alternatively, if we have dysbiosis, certain neurotransmitters and hormones may be impaired affecting our mood negatively. 1

As our fast moving culture looks for quick solutions with easy meals, fermentation has been lost. As a result, our health as a culture has significantly declined. In order to improve this, we need to relearn the processes of fermentation amongst other steps in food preparation.  This will improve food absorption and assimilation which will contribute to our health and longevity.

1. https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/health-benefits-offermenting

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