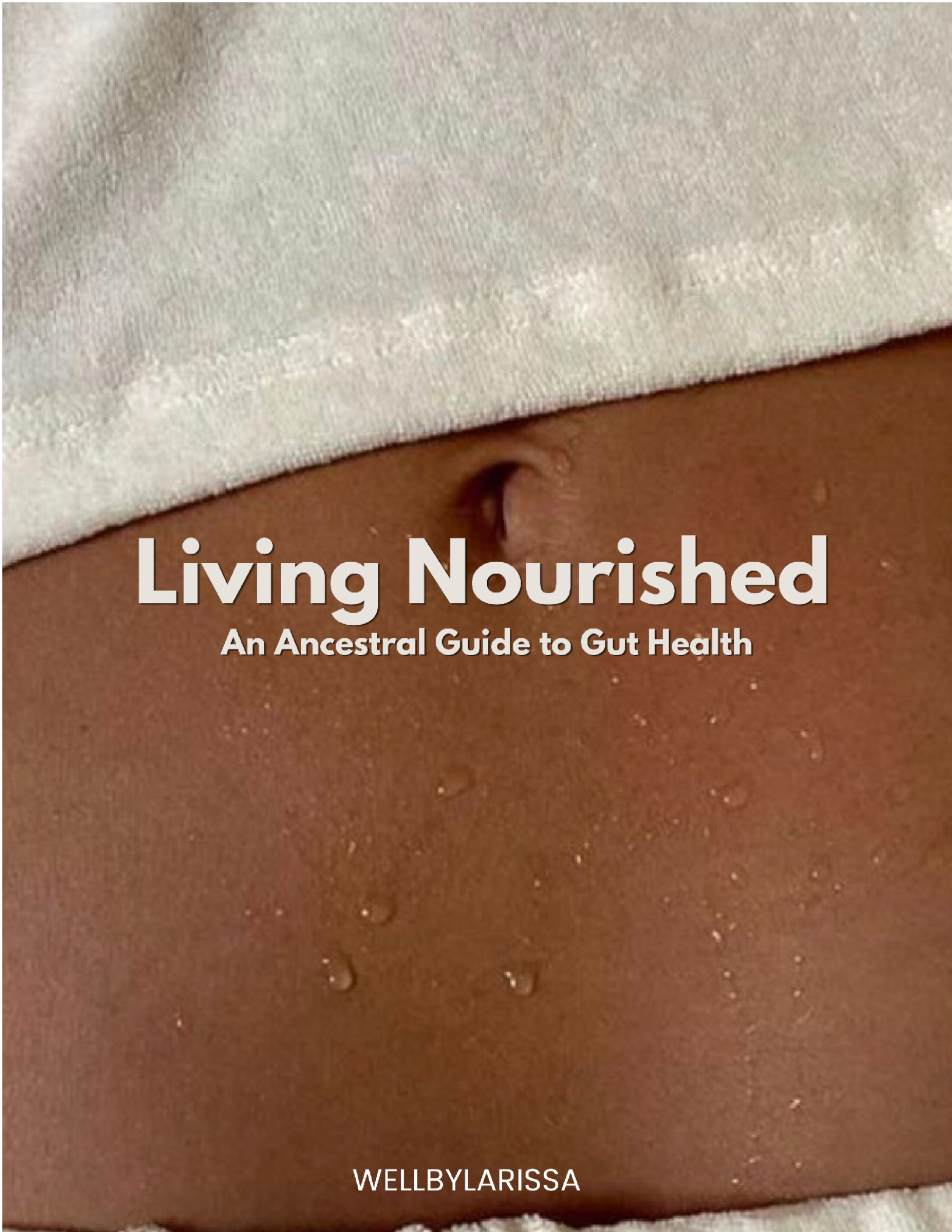




Living Nourished

An Ancestral Guide to Gut Health

WELLBYLARISSA

WELL BY LARISSA
PRESENTS

LIVING NOURISHED

AN ANCESTRAL GUIDE TO GUT HEALTH

Heal your gut the way your ancestors did. Through food, fermentation, and the wisdom of traditional cultures.

by wellbylarissa

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BEFORE WE BEGIN

Gut health has become one of the most talked about topics in modern wellness. And for good reason. The research emerging over the last two decades has completely overturned what we thought we knew about digestion, immunity, mental health, and hormone function. The gut is not just a tube that processes food. It is a complex ecosystem that governs your mood, your immune response, your hormones, and your ability to absorb the nutrients that keep you alive.

But here is what the wellness industry gets wrong. They treat gut health as a modern problem requiring modern solutions. Probiotic capsules with patented strains. Expensive powders. Elimination protocols that leave people more confused and more restricted than when they started.

Traditional food cultures had their own health struggles, including infection, parasites, and malnutrition, so we can't say they were free of gut problems. But across many traditional food cultures, fermentation, seasonal eating, long-cooked foods, and nose-to-tail cooking were ordinary parts of food preparation rather than modern wellness practices. Fermented foods regularly appeared with meals. Bone broth was medicine. Bitter herbs came before eating. Animal fats coated and protected the gut lining. Seasonal eating kept the microbiome diverse. These practices were not wellness trends. They were how humans ate for thousands of years, long before anyone called it gut health.

This guide brings those practices back. It explains the science behind why they work, where they come from across traditional cultures worldwide, and exactly how to incorporate them into your life starting with what you already have in your kitchen.

Your gut does not need a supplement protocol. It needs the foods it was designed to eat.

IN

THE GUT IS EVERYTHING

What the second brain does and why it matters

There is a reason the gut is called the second brain. It contains more neurons than the spinal cord, produces more serotonin than the brain, houses 70% of the immune system, and communicates continuously with every major organ in the body through the vagus nerve. The state of your gut affects your mood, your energy, your hormones, your skin, your immune response, and your ability to think clearly.

This understanding is relatively new in Western medicine. But it is not new to traditional cultures. Hippocrates wrote that all disease begins in the gut over 2,000 years ago. Ayurvedic medicine has centered digestive fire, known as agni, as the foundation of health for thousands of years. Traditional Chinese Medicine considers the spleen and stomach as the central organ system from which all other health flows. Every major healing tradition on earth understood the gut as the foundation of health long before science could explain why.



The modern gut health crisis is real and measurable. Rates of irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, leaky gut, food sensitivities, and small intestinal bacterial overgrowth have all risen dramatically in the last 50 years in Westernized populations. Rates of anxiety, depression, and neurodegenerative disease have risen alongside them. These are not coincidences. They share a common root in a disrupted gut microbiome and a damaged gut lining.

The good news is that the gut is remarkably resilient and responsive to diet and lifestyle change. Research consistently shows that significant shifts in microbiome composition can happen within days of changing what you eat. The practices in this guide have been proven by thousands of years of ancestral use and increasingly by the modern science that is finally catching up to what traditional cultures already knew.

01

WHAT DESTROYED THE MODERN GUT

Understanding how the damage happened is the first step toward reversing it

Before we can understand how to heal the gut, we need to understand how it was damaged. The gut health crisis is not random. It is the predictable consequence of a set of specific cultural, agricultural, and dietary shifts that have occurred primarily in the last 100 years.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are the most significant single contributor to the modern gut health crisis. A single course of antibiotics can reduce gut bacterial diversity by up to 90%, eliminating not just the pathogenic bacteria being targeted but the entire ecosystem of beneficial bacteria that took years to establish. Some species never fully recover after antibiotic treatment. Most people have taken multiple courses across their lifetime.

This does not mean antibiotics are never necessary. They are life-saving medicines. But the scale and casualness with which they are prescribed in modern medicine has created a population-level disruption of the gut microbiome with no historical precedent. The ancestral gut developed over millions of years in an environment without antibiotics. Traditional cultures maintained gut health through continuous reinoculation from fermented foods, soil contact, animal exposure, and the naturally diverse microbial environment of non-industrial life.

Processed Food and Seed Oils

The human gut microbiome evolved over hundreds of thousands of years consuming whole, unprocessed, seasonally diverse foods. The introduction of ultra-processed foods, refined grains, seed oils, artificial sweeteners, emulsifiers, and preservatives represents one of the most dramatic dietary shifts in human evolutionary history, compressed into a single generation.

Emulsifiers including polysorbate 80 and carboxymethylcellulose, found in almost all ultra-processed foods, have been shown to directly disrupt the mucus layer that protects the gut lining. Seed oils including soybean, canola, and sunflower oil are highly unstable polyunsaturated fats that oxidize during processing and cooking, releasing inflammatory compounds that damage the gut lining and alter microbiome composition. Artificial sweeteners including sucralose, aspartame, and saccharin have been shown to negatively alter gut microbiome composition and reduce diversity.

Glyphosate and Agricultural Chemicals

Glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup herbicide, is now detectable in the urine of the majority of Americans. It was originally patented as an antibiotic. Its mechanism of action in weeds disrupts the same pathway used by gut bacteria to produce essential amino acids. Research has shown that glyphosate is toxic to beneficial gut bacteria while allowing the growth of pathogenic species. It also disrupts the gut epithelial tight junctions, directly contributing to intestinal permeability.

Glyphosate residue is highest in oats, wheat, corn, soy, and legumes, the foods that make up the majority of the modern diet. The transition to organic food is not just a preference. For gut health it is a meaningful intervention.

Chronic Stress and Cortisol

The gut and the brain communicate bidirectionally through the vagus nerve, the enteric nervous system, and hormonal signaling. Chronic stress elevates cortisol, which directly alters gut microbiome composition, increases intestinal permeability, and slows digestive motility. Ancestral peoples were not free from stress. But their stress was acute rather than chronic. It resolved. The nervous system returned to baseline. Modern chronic stress keeps the nervous system in a sustained low-grade fight-or-flight state that the gut was never designed to tolerate continuously.

Over-Sanitization and Loss of Microbial Diversity

Traditional peoples lived in continuous contact with diverse microbial environments: soil, animals, fermented foods, outdoor air, and other humans. This exposure continuously diversified and reinforced the gut microbiome. Modern life has replaced this microbial richness with sanitized surfaces, antibacterial soaps, chlorinated water, ultra-clean packaged food, and sedentary indoor existence.

Research on the microbiomes of hunter-gatherer populations, including the Hadza of Tanzania, consistently shows dramatically higher diversity than Western populations, including bacteria that are completely absent from most Westernized guts. This diversity is associated with dramatically lower rates of every chronic disease including autoimmune conditions, metabolic disorders, and mental health conditions. We have sanitized ourselves into illness.

The Removal of Fermented Foods

Every traditional food culture on earth included fermented foods as a daily staple. Sauerkraut in Germany. Kimchi in Korea. Miso, natto, and pickled vegetables in Japan. Kefir and yogurt across the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Kvass in Russia. Injera in Ethiopia. These were not delicacies. They were the everyday food that continuously reinoculated the gut with diverse live bacteria at every meal.

The industrialization of the food system replaced these living fermented foods with pasteurized, shelf-stable products. The yogurt on the supermarket shelf has been heated to kill all bacteria and then has a small number of commercial strains added back. The pickles in the condiment aisle are vinegar-brined, not lacto-fermented, and contain no live bacteria. The ancestral constant stream of microbial input from food has been almost entirely eliminated from the modern diet.

Every one of these factors disrupts the gut in the same fundamental way: by reducing microbial diversity and damaging the gut lining. The ancestral answer addresses both simultaneously. Diverse whole foods, fermented foods, bone broth, and traditional preparation methods continuously rebuild what modern life continuously destroys.

02

THE ANCESTRAL GUT

What the human gut looks like when fed the way it was designed

The human gut microbiome did not evolve in a clinical setting. It evolved over hundreds of thousands of years in continuous contact with diverse food sources, seasonal variation, soil bacteria, animal microbiomes, and the microbial richness of the natural world. Understanding what the ancestral gut looked like gives us a clear template for what we are trying to restore.

Hunter-Gatherer Microbiome Research

Studies of the Hadza of Tanzania, one of the last remaining hunter-gatherer populations on earth, have produced some of the most striking findings in gut microbiome research. The Hadza gut microbiome contains approximately 40% more species diversity than the average Western gut. It includes dozens of bacterial species that are completely absent from most Westernized guts and have been lost from the Western microbiome over the last century.

The Hadza diet is radically seasonal and varied. In dry season they eat primarily meat, fat, and marrow. In wet season they eat tubers, berries, and honey. Their gut microbiome shifts dramatically with the season, which researchers believe is a feature rather than a flaw. The seasonal cycling of the microbiome may be as important as its overall diversity.

Traditional Fermentation Across Cultures

The universality of fermented foods across every traditional food culture is not coincidental. Before refrigeration, fermentation was preservation. But it was also medicine. Every culture that practiced fermentation understood intuitively, through observation across generations, that fermented foods supported digestion, immunity, and overall health in ways that unfermented foods did not.

Korean kimchi, which has been made for at least 3,000 years, contains dozens of *Lactobacillus* species that differ depending on the vegetables used, the region, the season, and the fermentation vessel. Japanese miso has been produced for over 1,000 years and contains hundreds of microbial species. European sauerkraut, documented in Roman times, provides vitamin C, diverse *Lactobacillus* strains, and the prebiotic fiber of fermented cabbage. Georgian tkemali, Indian lassi, Ethiopian injera, Mexican tepache. All traditional fermented foods that continuously fed and diversified the gut microbiome of the cultures that consumed them daily.

Nose to Tail Eating and Gut Integrity

Traditional cultures wasted nothing from an animal. The bones became broth, rich in gelatin and collagen that healed and lined the gut. The organs were eaten first, providing concentrated nutrients including vitamin A, which is essential for maintaining the integrity of the gut epithelium. The fat was rendered and used for cooking, providing fat-soluble vitamins and anti-inflammatory fatty acids that fed the gut lining cells directly.

This nose to tail approach reflected an intuitive understanding that different parts of the animal provided different nutritional medicine. Indigenous cultures across North America, Africa, and Asia ate the stomach contents of ruminant animals, consuming partially fermented plant material rich in diverse bacteria and enzymes. Arctic peoples ate fermented fish and aged meat. These practices, which seem extreme to modern sensibilities, were sophisticated adaptations to the nutritional and microbiological realities of traditional life.

Seasonal Eating and Microbiome Cycling

The ancestral diet was radically seasonal by necessity. Different foods at different times of year meant continuous variation in the types of fiber, polyphenols, and fermentable substrates available to the gut microbiome. Research now confirms that the microbiome is designed to cycle seasonally. Winter diets higher in fat and animal foods shift the microbiome toward fat-metabolizing species. Summer diets higher in diverse plant foods shift it toward carbohydrate-fermenting species. This seasonal flexibility appears to be protective against the kind of rigid, low-diversity microbiome that characterizes modern gut dysbiosis.

The ancestral gut was not special. It was simply fed the way the human gut was designed to be fed, consistently, diversely, and with living food.

03

THE GUT LINING AND LEAKY GUT

The most important barrier in the body and what happens when it fails

The gut lining is a single cell layer thick. One cell thick. It separates the contents of your gut, including partially digested food, bacteria, toxins, and waste, from your bloodstream and immune system. The integrity of this barrier is one of the most important factors in your overall health and one of the most commonly compromised in the modern body.

What the Gut Lining Actually Is

The gut epithelium is a continuous sheet of specialized cells called enterocytes held together by protein structures called tight junctions. These tight junctions act as a selective gateway, allowing nutrients, water, and electrolytes to pass through while keeping larger molecules, bacteria, and toxins out. The entire gut lining is replaced every three to five days, making it one of the most rapidly renewing tissues in the body and one of the most nutritionally demanding.

Coating the gut lining is a layer of mucus produced by goblet cells. This mucus layer provides a physical barrier, houses a dense community of protective bacteria, and contains immunoglobulins that are the first line of immune defense. The health of this mucus layer is critically dependent on diet. Specific dietary fibers feed the bacteria that maintain it. Animal fats and gelatin support its integrity. The removal of these foods from the diet leads to thinning of the mucus layer, which is consistently observed in patients with inflammatory bowel conditions.

How Leaky Gut Develops

Intestinal permeability, commonly called leaky gut, occurs when the tight junctions between gut epithelial cells become compromised, allowing undigested food particles, bacterial fragments, and toxins to pass directly into the bloodstream. The immune system, encountering these foreign molecules in the bloodstream, mounts an inflammatory response. When this happens chronically, it produces systemic inflammation that has been linked to autoimmune conditions, hormonal disruption, neurological symptoms, skin conditions, and metabolic dysfunction.

The factors that damage tight junctions include gluten in genetically susceptible individuals, glyphosate, lipopolysaccharides from certain gut bacteria, alcohol, NSAIDs including ibuprofen, chronic stress, and the emulsifiers found in ultra-processed foods. All of these are dramatically more prevalent in modern life than at any previous point in human history.

What Leaky Gut Does to Your Health

The consequences of chronic intestinal permeability are wide-ranging because the immune and inflammatory responses it triggers affect every system in the body. Research has associated increased intestinal permeability with autoimmune conditions including Hashimoto's thyroiditis, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis. With mental health conditions including depression and anxiety through

the gut-brain axis. With hormonal disruption through inflammation-mediated interference with hormone receptor signaling. With skin conditions including eczema, psoriasis, and acne rosacea.

The consistent finding across research is that healing the gut lining improves symptoms across all of these conditions in ways that targeting the conditions individually often does not.

Ancestral Foods That Heal the Gut Lining

- **Bone broth:** may support the gut lining and tight junction integrity, thanks to gelatin, collagen precursors, glycine, and proline. A traditional gut-supportive food across many cultures.
- **Animal fats:** especially grass-fed butter and tallow. Butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid produced from these fats by gut bacteria, is a primary fuel source for colonocytes (gut lining cells).
- **Fermented dairy:** the lactic acid and diverse bacteria in kefir and yogurt may support the mucus layer and provide Lactobacillus strains associated with gut barrier integrity.
- **Organ meats:** especially liver, the highest dietary source of vitamin A, which plays a role in maintaining the integrity of epithelial surfaces including the gut lining.
- **Slippery elm and marshmallow root:** traditional Western herbal remedies used for gut lining support, forming a soothing gel that coats the intestinal mucosa.
- **Zinc-rich foods:** oysters, red meat, and pumpkin seeds provide zinc, which plays a role in gut lining cell renewal and tight junction integrity.

04

FERMENTED FOODS AS MEDICINE

The original probiotic, prebiotic, and digestive medicine

Fermented foods are not a wellness trend. They function as a natural probiotic and prebiotic, and traditional digestive medicine across cultures. Across many traditional food cultures, fermented foods were an ordinary, near-daily part of eating, not an occasional specialty. The move away from fermented foods in the modern diet is one of several significant contributing factors to the gut health shifts we are living through.

How Fermented Foods Compare to Probiotic Supplements

A standard probiotic supplement contains a defined number of bacterial strains, typically three to ten, at a labeled concentration. Traditionally made fermented foods contain a much wider and more variable range of bacterial strains, though the exact count and concentration differ enormously depending on the vegetable, the salt ratio, the temperature, and the length of fermentation, so no single number can be promised from a home batch. What fermented foods offer that a capsule cannot is that whole food matrix: live bacteria alongside the lactic acid, vitamins, and prebiotic compounds that support them, in a food you are already building into your meals rather than an extra pill.

A 2021 study from Stanford University found that a high-fermented-food diet increased microbiome diversity and decreased markers of inflammation in human participants over the ten-week study period. The same study found that a high-fiber diet alone produced a smaller shift in inflammatory markers, suggesting fermented foods and fiber may work best together, though more research is needed to understand exactly how the two interact.

Stanford finding: Participants who ate the highest amounts of fermented foods showed a 19% increase in microbiome diversity and significant decreases in 19 inflammatory proteins, including interleukin-17 which is associated with autoimmune conditions. This is one of the most significant dietary intervention studies in gut health research.

Region	Signature Foods	Worth Knowing
East Asia	Miso, natto, kimchi	Miso: 1,300+ years old. Natto: rich in vitamin K2. Kimchi: linked to lower inflammatory markers.
Eastern Europe	Kefir, kvass, sauerkraut	Kefir traces back 2,000+ years to the Caucasus. Kvass carries liver-supporting betaine and betalains.
Middle East & India	Yogurt, lassi, fermented dairy	Yogurt has been made for roughly 10,000 years. Lassi is traditionally paired with digestive spices.
Africa	Injera, ogi	Injera is a fermented teff flatbread. Ogi, a fermented grain porridge, was often an infant's first food.

Traditional Fermented Foods Across Cultures

- **East Asia: Miso, Natto, and Kimchi:** Japanese miso has been produced for over 1,300 years and contains hundreds of microbial species, all eight essential amino acids, and high concentrations of isoflavones. Natto, a Japanese fermented soybean dish, contains *Bacillus subtilis*, produces nattokinase (a powerful anti-inflammatory enzyme), and is one of the highest dietary sources of vitamin K2. Korean kimchi has been shown to reduce inflammatory markers, support immune function, and improve insulin sensitivity.
- **Eastern Europe: Kefir, Kvass, and Sauerkraut:** Kefir originated in the Caucasus mountains and has been consumed for at least 2,000 years. Made from kefir grains, it contains dozens of probiotic strains, complete protein, B vitamins, and calcium in a highly bioavailable form. Beet kvass, a traditional Slavic fermented drink made from beets, water, and salt, provides *Lactobacillus* strains alongside the liver-supporting compounds betaine and betalains.
- **Middle East and India: Yogurt, Lassi, and Fermented Dairy:** Yogurt has been made across the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia for at least 10,000 years. Indian lassi, a yogurt-based drink often made with digestive spices including cumin, cardamom, and ginger, combines the probiotic benefit of fermented dairy with the digestive-stimulating properties of traditional spices. Ayurvedic medicine considers lassi an essential digestive support, particularly after the main meal of the day.
- **Africa: Injera, Ogi, and Fermented Grains:** Ethiopian injera, a sourdough flatbread made from fermented teff, provides *Lactobacillus* species alongside the prebiotic fiber of teff. West African ogi, a fermented porridge made from maize, sorghum, or millet, was traditionally given to infants as the first solid food across cultures, suggesting an intuitive understanding of its gut-supportive properties during the critical window of microbiome development.

How to Incorporate Fermented Foods Daily

The goal is not to eat a large serving of one fermented food once a day, and it doesn't need to be at every single meal. It is to include small amounts of diverse fermented foods a few times a day or week, in whatever rhythm fits your life, echoing the ancestral pattern of regular rather than occasional exposure.

- Morning: a small glass of kefir or a spoonful of fermented dairy with breakfast
- Lunch: a tablespoon of sauerkraut or kimchi alongside the main meal
- Dinner: a small serving of miso soup before the meal or fermented vegetables alongside
- Drinks: kombucha, kefir water, beet kvass, or fermented ginger beer as daily beverages
- Condiments: raw apple cider vinegar in dressings, fermented hot sauce, fermented mustard

Start small: If you are new to fermented foods or have significant gut dysbiosis, start with one to two tablespoons per day and increase as tolerated. If symptoms become significant or persist, stop and reassess rather than pushing through. Some people, including those with histamine intolerance or certain GI conditions, may not tolerate fermented foods well at all.

FERMENT SAFELY

Keep hands, jars, and tools clean, and use the salt ratio your recipe calls for. Salt controls which bacteria thrive, so don't cut it back. Keep vegetables fully submerged under their brine the whole time, using a fermentation weight or a small clean saucer if they float. Ferment at room temperature out of direct sun and check daily. Refrigerate once it tastes pleasantly tangy to slow things down. Discard a batch if you see fuzzy mold (not the harmless white kahm yeast film), if it smells rotten rather than sour, or if it turns slimy or discolored. When in doubt, throw it out.

05

BONE BROTH AS ANCESTRAL GUT MEDICINE

The oldest food medicine on earth

Bone broth is the oldest food medicine on earth. It appears in the culinary and medical records of virtually every civilization that has ever existed. Chinese medicine has used it as a kidney and gut tonic for over 2,500 years. Jewish penicillin, chicken soup as medicine for the sick, is documented in the writings of physician Moses Maimonides in the 12th century. South American abuelas have simmered caldo de res for generations as the first food given to the sick, the elderly, and the recovering. This universal convergence on bone broth as healing food is not coincidence. It is accumulated wisdom.

What Makes Bone Broth Different

Bone broth differs from stock or regular meat broth in one critical way: it is simmered long enough and with enough bone and connective tissue that gelatin and collagen precursors are fully extracted into the liquid. This process requires a minimum of 12 hours for chicken and 24 hours for beef. The result is a golden, gelatinous liquid that sets like jello when cooled, indicating a high gelatin content.

The compounds worth knowing about in bone broth are glycine, an amino acid involved in tight junction integrity. Proline, which supports the amino acid pool the gut epithelium draws on to renew itself. Glutamine, a primary fuel source for enterocytes. And gelatin, which coats and soothes the gut lining. Beyond the biochemistry, broth is also simply the story of traditional preparation: using the whole animal, wasting nothing, and turning bones and time into something warming and resourceful, the way it has been made for generations.

Bone Broth Across Traditional Cultures

- **China:** TCM Tang or bone broth has been prescribed in TCM for millennia as a kidney tonic and to support jing, or vital essence. Long-simmered pork bone soup with wolfberries and goji is a standard postpartum recovery food.
- **Korea:** Gomtang, a long-simmered ox bone soup, is considered a complete healing food eaten for recovery from illness, surgery, and childbirth. Seollongtang, a milky white ox bone soup simmered for 12 to 24 hours, is a national comfort food.
- **Mexico and Latin America:** Caldo de hueso and caldito are slow-simmered bone broths given to the sick and served before meals as a digestive preparation. Pozole, hominy corn soup traditionally made with pork bones, was a ceremonial food in Aztec culture.

- **France:** French classical cooking begins with stock. Fond de veau, fond de poulet, and fumet de poisson form the foundation of French cuisine and were understood by classical chefs as nutritionally essential, not just flavorful.
- **Middle East:** Maraq, a long-simmered lamb or goat bone broth, is served as a first course across the Arabian Peninsula and used medicinally for digestive complaints and recovery from illness.

How to Use Bone Broth Daily

- Morning: 8 oz of warm bone broth with a pinch of sea salt and a knob of butter or ghee as the first thing you consume
- Cooking: use broth instead of water for cooking grains, soups, stews, and sauces
- After exercise: bone broth is an excellent post-workout recovery drink that provides electrolytes and amino acids for tissue repair
- Evening: a warm cup of broth before bed supports overnight gut repair and provides glycine which improves sleep quality

Quality matters: The gut-healing potential of bone broth depends entirely on the quality of the bones used. Bones from grass-fed, pasture-raised animals have more collagen-rich connective tissue and more nutrient-dense marrow. Ask your butcher for knuckle bones, marrow bones, feet, and necks. These are the most collagen-rich cuts and they are often the least expensive.

06

THE GUT AND HORMONES

An emerging connection worth understanding

The connection between gut health and hormonal health is real, and it's one of the more overlooked pieces of the puzzle. If you are dealing with hormonal symptoms including PMS, irregular cycles, heavy periods, estrogen dominance, thyroid dysfunction, adrenal fatigue, or PCOS, gut health is worth looking at as one piece of a much bigger picture, alongside sleep, stress, nutrition, and the care of a trusted practitioner, not the single root cause.

The Estrobolome

The estrobolome is the collection of gut bacteria responsible for metabolizing and regulating estrogen in the body. After estrogen is used by the body it is processed by the liver into a form that can be eliminated through the gut. The estrobolome produces an enzyme called beta-glucuronidase that determines how much of this processed estrogen is excreted and how much is reabsorbed into circulation.

When the gut microbiome is disrupted, beta-glucuronidase activity can shift, which may affect how much processed estrogen is reabsorbed versus eliminated. Researchers are still working out how much this contributes to estrogen-related symptoms relative to ovarian function, liver health, stress, and other factors. Supporting the gut is worth considering as one part of supporting healthy estrogen metabolism, alongside those other pieces, not a stand-in for medical care.

The Gut and Thyroid Function

Gut bacteria are involved in supporting healthy thyroid hormone activity, though researchers are still working out exactly how much of T4-to-T3 conversion happens in the gut versus elsewhere in the body. A disrupted microbiome and increased intestinal permeability are both areas of active research in connection with thyroid function, alongside the more established roles of iodine, selenium, and stress management.

The ancestral foods worth prioritizing for thyroid-gut health are iodine-rich foods including wild fish and seaweed, selenium-rich meats and eggs that support T4 to T3 conversion, fermented foods that support overall microbiome diversity, and bone broth as part of an overall gut-supportive way of eating.

The Gut and Cortisol

The HPA axis that governs cortisol production is directly influenced by gut bacteria through the gut-brain axis. Certain *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* strains have been shown to directly modulate HPA axis reactivity, reducing cortisol responses to stress in both animal and human studies. A diverse, healthy microbiome literally makes the stress response more proportionate and more easily resolved.

Chronic elevated cortisol directly damages the gut lining and alters the microbiome toward stress-associated dysbiotic patterns. This creates a bidirectional cycle where gut damage amplifies

stress responses and stress responses amplify gut damage. Breaking this cycle requires addressing both sides simultaneously through gut healing food and nervous system support.

Ancestral Foods for Hormone-Gut Health

- Cruciferous vegetables: broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and kale contain indole-3-carbinol and DIM which support healthy estrogen metabolism through the gut and liver
- Fermented foods: directly support estrobolome diversity and healthy beta-glucuronidase activity
- Organ meats especially liver: provide vitamin A for gut lining integrity and B vitamins for hormone metabolism
- Wild fish: provide iodine and selenium for thyroid-gut health
- Bone broth: reduces intestinal permeability that disrupts hormone receptor signaling
- Prebiotic fibers from root vegetables and leeks: feed the estrobolome bacteria directly
- Grass-fed butter and animal fats: provide butyrate and fat-soluble vitamins that support both gut lining and hormone production

07

THE GUT AND THE BRAIN

90% of serotonin is made in your gut, not your brain

If you have ever had butterflies in your stomach before something nerve-wracking, felt nauseous with anxiety, or noticed that your digestion changes when you are stressed, you have experienced the gut-brain axis firsthand. This bidirectional communication network between the gut and the brain is one of the most significant recent discoveries in neuroscience and it has profound implications for how we understand and treat mental health.

Pathway	How It Connects Gut and Brain
Vagus nerve	Carries signals both ways between gut and brain; most of its traffic runs gut-to-brain.
Immune signaling	Gut-based immune activity produces molecules that can influence inflammation throughout the body, brain included.
Microbial metabolites	Compounds made by gut bacteria, including short-chain fatty acids, may cross into circulation and interact with the brain.
Endocrine system	Gut hormones and stress hormones like cortisol link digestion to mood and the body's stress response.

The Vagus Nerve

The vagus nerve is the primary highway of the gut-brain axis. It runs from the brainstem down through the neck, chest, and abdomen, connecting the brain directly to the heart, lungs, and gut. Critically, approximately 80 to 90% of the signals traveling on the vagus nerve go from the gut to the brain, not the other way around. The gut is telling the brain far more than the brain is telling the gut.

Vagus nerve tone, the responsiveness and efficiency of vagal signaling, is itself affected by gut health. A healthy, diverse microbiome supports robust vagal tone. A dysbiotic microbiome impairs it. Poor vagal tone is associated with anxiety, depression, and poor stress recovery. The ancestral practices that most powerfully support vagal tone are deep diaphragmatic breathing, cold water exposure, singing and humming, social connection, and eating fermented foods.

Gut Bacteria and Neurotransmitters

The gut and brain communicate through multiple pathways, including the vagus nerve, immune signaling, microbial metabolites, and the endocrine system. Most of the body's serotonin is produced in the gastrointestinal tract, where it plays important roles in intestinal function. Gut-derived serotonin does not simply cross into the brain, but the microbiome may influence brain function through several of these other gut-brain pathways, which researchers are still working to fully understand. Specific Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium strains also produce GABA, and gut bacteria produce short-chain fatty acids that can influence neuroinflammation.

This is an active and genuinely exciting area of research, and it's a good reason to take gut health seriously as part of how you feel day to day. It works alongside sleep, movement, and connection, not as a replacement for care when you need it.

Ancestral Practices for the Gut-Brain Axis

Traditional cultures across the world incorporated practices that we now understand to directly support the gut-brain axis. Communal eating, a universal ancestral practice, activates the parasympathetic nervous system through social bonding and reduces cortisol, directly supporting gut function. Eating slowly and taking time with food before eating, including the traditional practice of saying grace or a blessing, activates cephalic phase digestive responses that prime the gut for optimal function. Cold water exposure, practiced universally from Nordic cold plunges to Indigenous sweat lodge traditions, activates the vagus nerve through the diving reflex.

The gut-brain connection is real, still being mapped by researchers, and one meaningful piece of a much bigger picture that includes sleep, movement, stress, and connection.

08

THE GUT AND THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

70% of your immune system lives in your gut

Seventy percent of the immune system lives in the gut. This is not metaphor. The gut-associated lymphoid tissue (GALT) is the largest immune organ in the body, containing more immune cells than any other tissue. The gut microbiome educates and regulates the immune system from birth, determining what the immune system attacks and what it tolerates. A disrupted microbiome is a disrupted immune system.

How the Gut Trains the Immune System

From the moment of birth, the gut microbiome begins its lifelong project of immune education. Babies born vaginally are inoculated with the mother's vaginal and gut microbiota during passage through the birth canal. Breastfed babies receive complex oligosaccharides in breast milk that selectively feed *Bifidobacterium infantis*, the most important bacteria for neonatal immune development. Early childhood exposure to diverse microbial environments including soil, animals, and fermented foods continues to shape the immune system's calibration of self versus non-self.

Short-chain fatty acids produced by gut bacteria, particularly butyrate and propionate, directly regulate immune cell development and function. They promote the growth of regulatory T cells that prevent inappropriate immune responses, reduce inflammatory cytokine production, and maintain the immune tolerance that prevents the immune system from attacking the body's own tissues.

Seasonal Immunity and the Ancestral Gut

Ancestral peoples experienced natural seasonal cycles in immune function that tracked with the availability of fermented foods, exposure to diverse microbial environments, and the composition of the diet. Winter, when fresh food was scarce but fermented stores were at their peak, was a time of naturally elevated immune readiness. Spring, when fresh bitter greens provided a flood of new prebiotic compounds, represented a seasonal renewal of the microbiome and the immune system simultaneously.

Supporting this seasonal immune rhythm today means eating fermented foods year-round with particular emphasis in winter and early spring, prioritizing diverse seasonal produce, spending time outdoors in all seasons, and using seasonal herbs including elderberry, echinacea, and medicinal mushrooms as part of the traditional seasonal immune support toolkit.

Ancestral Foods for Immune-Gut Health

- Elderberry: used across European, Indigenous American, and Middle Eastern traditions for immune support, elderberry compounds have been shown to directly inhibit viral replication and modulate immune response through gut-mediated mechanisms
- Medicinal mushrooms: shiitake, maitake, and reishi contain beta-glucans that directly stimulate gut-associated immune cell activity, used in Japanese and Chinese medicine for over 4,000 years

- Garlic and onion: contain prebiotic inulin and FOS that selectively feed beneficial bacteria, and allicin which has direct antimicrobial activity against pathogenic gut bacteria
- Bone broth: the glycine and glutamine in bone broth reduce inappropriate inflammatory immune responses while supporting barrier function
- Raw honey: contains diverse beneficial bacteria, prebiotic oligosaccharides, and antimicrobial compounds. Traditional cultures used raw honey medicinally across every continent. Only raw unheated honey retains these properties.

09

FOODS THAT HEAL THE GUT

Your ancestral gut healing food reference

This chapter is your ancestral gut healing food reference. Every food listed here has both a strong traditional use history and supporting modern research for gut health. These are the foods to prioritize, increase, and return to as the foundation of your eating.

The Tier One Gut Healing Foods

- **Bone Broth:** The most impactful single gut healing food available. Contains gelatin, glycine, proline, and glutamine for gut lining repair. Source from grass-fed, pasture-raised animals. Aim for one to two cups daily.
- **Fermented Foods:** The most important category for microbiome diversity. Include at least one fermented food at every meal. Prioritize traditionally made, raw, unpasteurized versions. Sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, raw yogurt, miso, tempeh, beet kvass, and fermented pickles.
- **Organ Meats Especially Liver:** Liver is the most nutrient-dense food available for gut health. It provides vitamin A for gut epithelial integrity, B12 and folate for gut cell DNA synthesis, copper and zinc for gut barrier function, and CoQ10 for gut mitochondrial energy production. Eat one to two servings per week minimum.
- **Grass-Fed Butter and Ghee:** The highest dietary source of butyrate, the primary fuel for colonocytes. Also contains conjugated linoleic acid which has anti-inflammatory effects on the gut mucosa, and vitamin K2. Cook with it, add it to broth, spread it on everything.
- **Wild Caught Fatty Fish:** The omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA in wild-caught salmon, sardines, mackerel, and anchovies are directly anti-inflammatory in the gut. They reduce the gut inflammation that drives leaky gut and dysbiosis, support the mucus layer, and feed beneficial bacteria in the colon. Aim for three to four servings per week.

Prebiotic Foods

Prebiotics are the non-digestible fibers and compounds that selectively feed beneficial gut bacteria. Without adequate prebiotic fiber, even the most diverse probiotic food cannot sustain a healthy microbiome.

- Garlic and onion: contain inulin and FOS that selectively feed Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus, the most health-associated gut bacteria
- Leeks and asparagus: rich in inulin, particularly powerful when eaten slightly undercooked to preserve prebiotic fiber content
- Jerusalem artichokes: one of the highest prebiotic fiber foods available, feed diverse Bifidobacterium species

- Dandelion root: a traditional bitter prebiotic used across European herbal medicine, also supports bile flow and liver function
- Green plantains and unripe bananas: contain resistant starch that feeds the bacteria associated with short-chain fatty acid production
- Cooked and cooled potatoes and rice: cooking and cooling creates resistant starch that bypasses digestion and feeds colonic bacteria
- Chicory root: the most studied prebiotic fiber, used in herbal medicine for centuries for digestive complaints

Anti-Inflammatory Herbs and Spices

- **Turmeric and Black Pepper:** Curcumin combined with piperine from black pepper is one of the most potent anti-inflammatory compounds for the gut, reducing intestinal inflammation and supporting the gut-brain axis. Used in Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicine for over 4,000 years for digestive complaints.
- **Ginger:** Used across Asian, Indian, and Middle Eastern traditional medicine as the primary digestive herb. Stimulates gastric motility, reduces nausea, decreases intestinal inflammation, and has direct antimicrobial activity against pathogenic gut bacteria.
- **Fennel:** Used in Mediterranean and Ayurvedic medicine for bloating, gas, and intestinal spasm. Contains anethole which has direct antimicrobial activity and supports intestinal motility.
- **Licorice Root:** DGL (deglycyrrhized licorice) is the most studied natural compound for gut lining repair and H. pylori management, one of the most used herbs in traditional Chinese medicine.
- **Peppermint:** Used across European and Asian herbal traditions for IBS symptoms, intestinal spasm, and bloating. Enteric-coated peppermint oil is one of the most clinically studied natural remedies for IBS.

10

FOODS TO REDUCE FOR A GUT-SUPPORTIVE DIET

No single food can outpace a diet that continually challenges the gut lining and the microbiome

Understanding what supports the gut is only half the picture. The other half is understanding what tends to work against it. No amount of bone broth and fermented foods can fully outpace a diet that continually challenges the gut lining and the microbiome. These are the foods and food components with the strongest evidence for gut harm.

The Most Gut-Damaging Foods

- **Industrial Seed Oils:** Soybean oil, canola oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, corn oil, and cottonseed oil. These highly processed polyunsaturated fats oxidize during extraction and cooking, releasing reactive oxygen species and aldehyde compounds that directly damage the gut lining, alter microbiome composition toward inflammatory species, and increase intestinal permeability. The shift from animal fats to seed oils in the 20th century corresponds directly with the rise of inflammatory gut conditions.
- **Refined Sugar and High Fructose Corn Syrup:** Sugar feeds pathogenic gut bacteria including *Candida* and certain *Clostridium* species while starving beneficial bacteria that rely on complex fibers. High fructose corn syrup has been shown to increase intestinal permeability and contributes to non-alcoholic fatty liver disease which is deeply connected to gut health through the gut-liver axis. The ancestral diet contained sugar primarily in seasonal fruit and raw honey, both of which contain fiber and antimicrobial compounds that buffer their effects.
- **Emulsifiers in Ultra-Processed Food:** Polysorbate 80, carboxymethylcellulose, carrageenan, and other emulsifiers are found in almost all ultra-processed foods including many marketed as healthy. These compounds directly disrupt the gut mucus layer, reducing its thickness and compromising its protective function. Animal studies have shown that even at low doses, dietary emulsifiers produce gut microbiome changes and low-grade intestinal inflammation comparable to the changes seen in inflammatory bowel disease.
- **Artificial Sweeteners:** Sucralose, aspartame, saccharin, and acesulfame K have all been shown to negatively alter gut microbiome composition. A landmark 2022 study in *Cell* found that saccharin and sucralose produced significant microbiome and metabolomic changes in human participants with potential implications for glucose tolerance and gut health. The ancestral gut never encountered these compounds and has no evolved mechanisms for handling them.
- **Alcohol:** Alcohol directly damages the gut lining, increases intestinal permeability, alters the gut microbiome toward dysbiotic patterns, and impairs the liver's ability to process the bacterial toxins that leak through a permeable gut. Even moderate regular alcohol consumption produces measurable increases in intestinal permeability and systemic endotoxin levels.
- **Conventional Gluten:** Modern wheat has been selectively bred for high gluten content and is processed in ways that increase its inflammatory potential compared to traditional heritage grains.

For those with celiac disease, gluten is directly toxic to the gut lining. For a significant percentage of non-celiac individuals, modern wheat gluten triggers intestinal permeability through zonulin signaling. Traditional preparation methods including long fermentation (sourdough) reduce gluten's inflammatory potential significantly.

11

THE ANCESTRAL GUT HEALING PROTOCOL

The four R framework done entirely through food and lifestyle

The four R framework for gut healing, Remove, Replace, Reinoculate, and Repair, is widely used in functional medicine. The ancestral version uses food and lifestyle as the primary medicine and supplements as a secondary support at most. It is simpler, more sustainable, and has thousands of years of successful use behind it.

Step	Focus	Start Here
Remove	Reduce what works against the gut	Clear out seed oils and ultra-processed food
Replace	Restore digestive basics	Add digestive spices and organ meats weekly
Reinoculate	Rebuild microbial diversity	A little fermented food, most days
Repair	Support the gut lining	A cup of bone broth and consistent sleep

Remove: Eliminate What Is Damaging the Gut

The first step is removing the most gut-damaging elements from your diet and environment. Prioritize by impact.

- Remove all industrial seed oils. Replace with grass-fed butter, ghee, tallow, lard, and olive oil. This is the single highest impact dietary change for gut inflammation.
- Remove ultra-processed foods and read ingredient labels for emulsifiers including carrageenan, polysorbate 80, and carboxymethylcellulose.
- Reduce refined sugar significantly. Raw honey, maple syrup, and fruit in season are all ancestrally appropriate.
- Reduce alcohol to special occasions at most during the gut healing period.
- Consider removing conventional gluten for six to eight weeks to assess gut response. Replace with sourdough if you want to reintroduce wheat.

Replace: Restore What the Gut Needs to Function

The second step is restoring the foods, stomach acid, and digestive enzymes that allow the gut to function properly.

- If it agrees with you, diluted raw apple cider vinegar (one tablespoon in water) or digestive bitters can be used as a traditional pre-meal ritual. Skip it if you experience reflux, burning, or irritation.
- Add digestive spices to every meal: ginger, turmeric, black pepper, fennel, and cumin all stimulate digestive enzyme activity.

- Eat liver and organ meats weekly to restore the zinc, vitamin A, and B vitamins required for gut lining cell production.
- Increase dietary fat from ancestral sources to provide butyrate and fat-soluble vitamins for colonocyte function.

Reinoculate: Rebuild the Microbiome

The third step is reinoculating the gut with diverse beneficial bacteria through food and exposure to natural microbial environments.

- Add fermented foods regularly. Start with one tablespoon of sauerkraut or kimchi, a small glass of kefir, or a tablespoon of raw apple cider vinegar. Increase gradually.
- Eat a minimum of 30 different plant foods per week. Research shows that people who eat 30 or more different plant foods weekly have dramatically more diverse microbiomes. Each plant provides different prebiotic compounds that feed different bacterial species.
- Spend time outdoors with bare feet on natural ground and hands in soil when possible. The skin microbiome and gut microbiome are connected and both benefit from natural microbial exposure.
- Eat seasonal, locally grown food as much as possible. Local food carries regional bacteria that colonize the gut and support local immune adaptation.

Repair: Support the Gut Lining

The fourth step is actively supporting the gut lining using the ancestral foods and practices that have supported gut epithelial integrity across human history.

- Drink one to two cups of bone broth daily. This is the most direct food intervention for gut lining repair. Consistency over time produces the most significant results.
- Eat gelatin-rich foods regularly including slow-cooked meats, oxtail, chicken feet broth, and naturally gelling bone broths.
- Reduce stress and support the vagus nerve through daily practices including deep breathing, cold water exposure, communal eating, and time in nature.
- Sleep 7 to 9 hours consistently. The gut lining regenerates primarily during deep sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation is one of the most underappreciated contributors to gut lining damage.

The timeline: everyone is different, but many people notice initial improvements in digestive comfort within a few weeks of consistent practice, with more significant shifts often unfolding over several months. This is not a fast fix. It is a lifestyle. The good news is that the practices themselves are inherently nourishing and tend to become self-sustaining once they're part of your routine.

12

GUT HEALING RECIPES

Simple, deeply nourishing, rooted in traditional food cultures from around the world

Every recipe in this chapter is built around the gut healing principles in this guide. They use bone broth as a base, fermented foods as a component, prebiotic-rich vegetables, anti-inflammatory spices, and ancestral fats.

01. Classic Grass-Fed Bone Broth

Ingredients

- 3 to 4 lbs mixed grass-fed beef bones: knuckles, marrow, oxtail
- 2 tbsp raw apple cider vinegar
- 2 carrots, 2 celery stalks, 1 onion quartered
- Bay leaves, peppercorns, fresh thyme, filtered water to cover by 2 inches

Instructions

1. Roast bones at 400F for 30 to 40 minutes until browned. Transfer to large pot.
2. Add vinegar and cold water. Bring to near-boil then reduce to lowest possible simmer.
3. Add vegetables and herbs. Simmer 24 hours. The longer the richer and more gelatinous.
4. Strain, cool, skim fat if desired. Freeze in quart jars. Drink or cook with daily.

The gelatin, glycine, and proline in this broth may support the gut lining and tight junction integrity. This is the foundation of the ancestral gut healing protocol.

02. Golden Turmeric Bone Broth

Ingredients

- 6 cups homemade bone broth
- 1 tsp fresh turmeric grated (or half tsp dried), 1 tsp fresh ginger grated
- Pinch of black pepper, 1 tsp grass-fed butter or ghee, sea salt to taste

Instructions

5. Warm broth gently. Stir in turmeric, ginger, and black pepper.
6. Pour into a mug and stir in butter. Drink warm as a morning tonic or before meals.

Curcumin from turmeric is one of the most studied anti-inflammatory compounds for gut health. Combined with black pepper for absorption and fat for fat-soluble vitamin delivery, this is morning gut medicine.

03. Fermented Ginger Carrots

Ingredients

- 4 large carrots, peeled and cut into sticks or coins
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger grated, 1 tsp sea salt per cup of filtered water (for brine), fresh dill optional

Instructions

7. Pack carrots and ginger tightly into a clean quart jar.
8. Dissolve salt in water and pour over carrots until submerged. Leave 1 inch headspace.
9. Cover with cloth and ferment at room temperature 3 to 5 days tasting daily.
10. Seal and refrigerate when pleasantly tangy. Keeps 3 months.

Fermented carrots provide Lactobacillus strains alongside the prebiotic fiber of carrots and the antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory compounds of ginger. Eat a few with every meal.

04. Gut Healing Congee with Ginger and Bone Broth

Ingredients

- 1 cup white rice, 8 cups homemade bone broth
- 1 inch fresh ginger grated, 2 garlic cloves minced
- Sea salt and white pepper, grass-fed butter to finish
- To serve: soft boiled egg, green onion, fermented vegetables

Instructions

11. Combine rice and broth in a heavy pot. Bring to a boil then reduce to lowest simmer.
12. Cook uncovered 45 to 60 minutes stirring occasionally until rice has completely broken down.
13. Add ginger, garlic, and seasoning. Stir in butter before serving.
14. Top with egg, green onion, and a spoonful of fermented vegetables.

Congee cooked in bone broth delivers gut-healing gelatin and amino acids in the most bioavailable, easily digestible form possible. This is the ancestral sick food of East Asia for a reason.

05. Kefir Overnight Bowl with Honey and Bee Pollen

Ingredients

- 1 cup whole milk kefir, half cup soaked and drained rolled oats or millet
- 1 tbsp raw local honey, 1 tsp bee pollen
- Fresh berries or sliced fruit, pinch of cinnamon

Instructions

15. Combine kefir and oats in a jar. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
16. In the morning top with honey, bee pollen, fruit, and cinnamon.

Kefir provides dozens of probiotic strains while the oats provide prebiotic beta-glucan fiber that feeds Bifidobacterium. The overnight soaking pre-digests the oats. Bee pollen adds antimicrobial compounds and diverse plant-based nutrients.

06. Traditional Miso Soup with Wakame and Tofu

Ingredients

- 4 cups filtered water or light dashi
- 3 tbsp unpasteurized miso paste (white or red)
- Half cup dried wakame seaweed rehydrated, half block silken tofu cubed
- 2 green onions sliced. Do not boil after adding miso as this kills the beneficial bacteria.

Instructions

17. Bring water to just below a simmer. Add wakame and tofu and heat gently 3 minutes.
18. Remove from heat. Dissolve miso in a small amount of the broth then stir into the pot.
19. Serve immediately topped with green onion.

Traditional miso contains hundreds of microbial species. It provides prebiotic oligosaccharides, all essential amino acids, and B vitamins. Wakame provides iodine and fucoxanthins that support gut barrier function. Serve before every meal for a Japanese approach to daily gut maintenance.

07. Slow-Cooked Chicken with 40 Cloves of Garlic

Ingredients

- 1 whole pastured chicken or 6 bone-in thighs
- 40 garlic cloves unpeeled, 2 cups bone broth
- Fresh thyme and rosemary, 3 tbsp ghee or butter, sea salt and pepper

Instructions

20. Season chicken and sear in ghee until golden. Remove.

21. Add garlic cloves to pot. Return chicken. Add broth and herbs.
22. Cover and cook at 300F for 2 hours until chicken is falling off the bone.
23. Squeeze the soft garlic from their skins into the cooking liquid and stir. Serve chicken with the garlic-enriched broth spooned over everything.

Slow cooking converts the 40 garlic cloves from pungent raw alliums into sweet, buttery prebiotic medicine. Garlic is one of the most powerful prebiotic foods available, selectively feeding Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus while inhibiting pathogenic bacteria.

08. Liver and Onion with Apple Cider Vinegar Glaze

Ingredients

- 1 lb pastured chicken or beef liver, sliced thin
- 2 large onions thinly sliced, 3 tbsp grass-fed butter
- 2 tbsp raw apple cider vinegar, 1 tsp fresh thyme, sea salt and pepper

Instructions

24. Soak liver in milk or water with a splash of apple cider vinegar for 30 minutes. Pat dry.
25. Caramelize onions in butter over low heat for 30 minutes until deeply golden.
26. Push onions aside, increase heat, and quickly sear liver 2 to 3 minutes per side. Do not overcook.
27. Add apple cider vinegar and thyme to the pan. Cook 1 minute and serve.

Liver is the highest dietary source of vitamin A for gut epithelial integrity, B12 for gut cell DNA synthesis, and copper for gut enzyme function. Eaten weekly it provides more gut-relevant nutrition than any supplement.

09. Fermented Beet and Ginger Salad

Ingredients

- 4 medium beets peeled and julienned or grated
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger finely grated, 1 tsp caraway seeds optional
- 1 tsp non-iodized sea salt per cup of beet

Instructions

28. Combine beets, ginger, caraway, and salt in a bowl. Massage firmly for 5 minutes until brine releases.
29. Pack tightly into a clean jar. Press until brine covers beets. Add water if needed.
30. Cover with cloth and ferment 3 to 7 days at room temperature. Refrigerate when tangy.

Fermented beets combine the prebiotic fiber of beets with Lactobacillus strains from lacto-fermentation and the liver-supporting compounds betaine and betalains. A tablespoon with each meal supports both gut and liver health simultaneously.

10. Healing Kitchari (Ayurvedic Gut Reset)

Ingredients

- 1 cup split yellow mung dal soaked overnight, half cup white basmati rice
- 1 inch fresh ginger grated, 1 tsp each: turmeric, cumin, coriander
- Half tsp each: fennel seeds, black pepper, 2 tbsp ghee
- 4 to 5 cups bone broth or water, sea salt and fresh cilantro to finish

Instructions

31. Bloom spices and ginger in ghee in a heavy pot over medium heat for 2 minutes.
32. Add drained mung dal, rice, and broth. Bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer.
33. Cook 30 to 40 minutes until very soft and porridge-like. Add more liquid as needed.
34. Season with salt and top with fresh cilantro and an extra drizzle of ghee.

Kitchari is the primary therapeutic food of Ayurveda and has been used as a gut reset and digestive healing food in India for over 5,000 years. It is considered the most easily digestible complete protein available. Used during illness, recovery, seasonal transitions, and as a regular gut rest meal.

13

GUT HEALING DRINK RECIPES

Ancestral cultures understood that healing beverages were as important as healing food

Every traditional medical system has a pharmacopoeia of medicinal drinks for digestive health. These are the most ancestrally grounded and scientifically supported gut healing drinks, each with full instructions.

01. ACV and Ginger Morning Tonic

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp raw apple cider vinegar with the mother
- 1 tsp fresh ginger juice or half tsp dried ginger
- 8 oz warm water, half tsp raw honey optional, squeeze of lemon

Instructions

35. Combine all in a glass and stir. Drink 15 to 20 minutes before breakfast.

This morning tonic stimulates stomach acid production, activates bile flow, and primes digestive enzyme activity before the first meal. Used across European folk medicine and Ayurveda as a daily digestive support practice. The acetic acid in ACV also directly feeds beneficial gut bacteria.

02. Traditional Digestive Bitters

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp dried dandelion root, 1 tsp dried gentian root
- 1 tsp dried orange peel, half tsp fennel seeds, 1 cup boiling water

Instructions

36. Steep all herbs in boiling water for 15 minutes. Strain.
37. Drink one small cup (2 to 4 oz) 15 minutes before meals.

Digestive bitters have been used in virtually every traditional medicine system as the primary pre-meal digestive preparation. The bitter taste directly stimulates the cephalic phase digestive response, increasing stomach acid, bile, and digestive enzyme secretion. A small bitter drink before meals is the ancestral digestive supplement.

03. Homemade Water Kefir Probiotic Soda

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp water kefir grains, quarter cup organic cane sugar
- 1 quart filtered water at room temperature
- 1 dried fig or apricot, slice of lemon

Instructions

38. Dissolve sugar in a small amount of warm water. Cool then add to quart jar with remaining water.
39. Add kefir grains, dried fruit, and lemon. Cover with cloth and ferment 24 to 48 hours.
40. Strain, bottle, and allow a second ferment sealed for 12 to 24 hours for carbonation.
41. Refrigerate and drink 4 to 8 oz daily.

Water kefir provides diverse probiotic strains, organic acids, and B vitamins in a delicious naturally carbonated form. It is one of the most bioavailable and diverse probiotic drinks available and is completely customizable with seasonal fruits and herbs.

04. Slippery Elm and Marshmallow Root Gut Soothing Tea

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp slippery elm bark powder, 1 tbsp dried marshmallow root
- 2 cups cold filtered water (cold infusion works better for marshmallow root)
- Raw honey to sweeten

Instructions

42. Combine slippery elm and marshmallow root in cold water. Allow to infuse for 4 to 8 hours or overnight.
43. Strain and warm gently. Do not boil. Sweeten with honey.
44. Drink one to two cups daily especially on an empty stomach.

Slippery elm has been used by Indigenous peoples of North America as a gut healing food and medicine for centuries. Both slippery elm and marshmallow root form a soothing mucilaginous gel when prepared in water that coats and protects the gut lining directly. One of the most effective ancestral remedies for intestinal inflammation and irritation.

05. Licorice Root and Fennel Digestive Tea

Ingredients

- 1 tsp DGL licorice root (deglycyrrhized), 1 tsp fennel seeds lightly crushed

- Half tsp dried peppermint, 2 cups boiling water

Instructions

45. Steep all herbs in boiling water for 10 minutes. Strain.
46. Drink one cup after meals for digestive support.

This combination has been used in European and Middle Eastern herbal traditions for post-meal digestive support for centuries. Licorice root is the most studied natural compound for gut lining repair and H. pylori management. Fennel and peppermint reduce bloating, gas, and intestinal spasm.

06. Bone Broth Elixir with Medicinal Mushrooms

Ingredients

- 8 oz warm bone broth
- 1 tsp reishi mushroom powder, half tsp chaga mushroom powder optional
- 1 tsp grass-fed butter or ghee, pinch of cinnamon and sea salt

Instructions

47. Warm broth gently. Whisk in mushroom powders, fat, cinnamon, and salt.
48. Pour into a mug and drink in the morning or before bed.

Reishi mushroom has been called the mushroom of immortality in Chinese medicine for over 2,000 years. Its beta-glucan polysaccharides directly modulate gut-associated immune tissue. Combined with the gut-healing compounds in bone broth this is one of the most potent ancestral gut and immune support drinks available.

14

30 DAYS OF ANCESTRAL NOURISHMENT*A month of rebuilding traditional food habits*

This 30 day plan applies the four R protocol from Chapter 11 in a practical week by week sequence. It is not a strict diet. It is a framework for gradually introducing gut-supportive practices while reducing the ones with the strongest evidence for gut harm. Do what you can, in whatever order fits your life.

Week	Theme	The Gist
1	Remove and Prepare	Clear out seed oils and ultra-processed food; start broth and one fermented food daily
2	Replace and Reinoculate	Fermented foods with meals; add prebiotics, digestive spices, and organ meats
3	Repair and Deepen	More broth, gut-soothing teas, vagus nerve practices, and plant diversity
4	Establish and Sustain	Lock in the habits that felt sustainable and build your ongoing routine

Week 1: Remove and Prepare

- Clear seed oils from your kitchen. Replace with grass-fed butter, ghee, tallow, or coconut oil.
- Stop buying ultra-processed food. Read labels and remove products containing emulsifiers, artificial sweeteners, and refined seed oils.
- Reduce sugar to natural whole food sources only: raw honey, maple syrup, and seasonal fruit.
- Make your first batch of bone broth this week. Use it as a base for meals and drink a cup daily.
- If it agrees with you, try the ACV morning tonic before breakfast a few days this week. Skip it if you experience reflux, burning, or irritation.
- Add one fermented food daily: a tablespoon of sauerkraut or kimchi, a glass of kefir, or miso soup.
- Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night this week. Gut healing happens during sleep.

Week 2: Replace and Reinoculate

- Increase fermented foods to a small serving at every meal.
- Add one prebiotic food daily: garlic in cooking, cooked and cooled potatoes, green plantain, or dandelion greens.
- Cook one gut healing recipe from Chapter 12 this week.
- Add turmeric and black pepper to one meal daily.
- Try digestive bitters or a bitter herb tea before your largest meal of the day.
- Spend at least 20 minutes outside barefoot or with your hands in soil or natural water this week.

- Eat liver or organ meat once this week. Even a small amount of chicken liver pate on sourdough counts.

Week 3: Repair and Deepen

- Increase bone broth to two cups daily if possible. One in the morning and one in the evening.
- Try the slippery elm and marshmallow root tea on an empty stomach this week.
- Cook one Ayurvedic or traditional healing recipe: kitchari, miso soup, or congee with bone broth.
- Practice one vagus nerve toning activity daily: 5 minutes of deep diaphragmatic breathing, cold shower ending, humming or singing, or a slow mindful meal with people you enjoy.
- Eat 20 or more different plant foods this week. Count them. Include herbs and spices.
- Make one fermented drink: water kefir, beet kvass, or fermented ginger lemonade.
- Assess how you feel. Everyone's timeline is different, and that's normal.

Week 4: Establish and Sustain

- Review the Remove list from Chapter 10. Have you eliminated the most damaging foods consistently?
- Establish a bone broth making routine. Make a large batch and freeze it so you always have it available.
- Identify your two to three most sustainable fermented food habits and commit to them as a permanent daily practice.
- Try one new gut healing recipe or ferment you have not made before.
- Aim for 30 different plant foods this week. Include seasonal herbs, roots, and greens.
- Make a gut healing drink your daily ritual: morning ACV tonic, evening bone broth elixir, or daily kefir.
- Reflect on what has changed. Energy, digestion, mood, skin, and sleep are the first areas most people notice improvement.
- Commit to continuing. These 30 days are the beginning, not the destination.

The Gut as Foundation

Every traditional culture that understood health began with the gut. Not because they had sequenced the microbiome or mapped the vagus nerve but because they observed, over thousands of years, that the state of digestion predicted everything else. When the gut was well, the person was well. When the gut was disrupted, symptoms appeared throughout the body, in the mind, in the skin, in the energy, in the hormones.

The foods that heal it are not exotic or expensive. They are bone broth, fermented vegetables, organ meats, prebiotic plants, and anti-inflammatory spices. They are the foods your great grandmother made, the foods that traditional cultures have eaten for millennia, the foods that the human gut evolved to thrive on.

Start with one practice. A cup of bone broth. A tablespoon of sauerkraut. An ACV morning tonic. Let that become a habit and then add the next one. Slow, consistent, ancestral. This is how the gut heals.

Your gut has been trying to heal for a long time. Give it the food it was designed to eat and watch what happens.

**YOUR GUT DOES NOT NEED A SUPPLEMENT PROTOCOL.
IT NEEDS THE FOODS IT WAS DESIGNED TO EAT.**

Start with one practice. Let that become a habit. Then add the next one.

wellbylarissa.com | @wellbylarissa