

# Fermented Food Category Map

Use this map when a label blurs fermented foods, probiotics, prebiotics, and postbiotics.

Category	Plain Meaning	Main Question
Fermented food	Food made through desired microbial growth and enzymatic conversion	Which food, portion, and tolerance pattern fit?
Probiotic	Defined live microorganism with demonstrated health benefit	Which strain, dose, and outcome were studied?
Prebiotic	Substrate selectively used by host microorganisms	Which ingredient and dose fit your symptoms?
Postbiotic	Inanimate microorganisms or components with demonstrated benefit	Which preparation was studied and for whom?

## Practical Rule

Fermented is not automatically probiotic. Probiotic is not automatically better. The right next step depends on the claim you are evaluating and the gut pattern you are working with.