Gabriela Riscuta, J Food Process Technol 2015, 6:8
http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/2157-7110.S1.023

OMICS International
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4th International Conference and Exhibition on
Food Processing & Technology
August 10-12, 2015 London, UK

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Fermented dairy products and their potential influences on health and disease

Humans consume fermented food produced through natural fermentation since ancient times. Around 7000 BC, controlled fermentation process started to be used in order to produce alcoholic beverages from fruits, rice and honey. Among other fermented foods, today, fermented dairies containing live active bacteria are receiving an increased attention. Historically, under the action of indigenous microflora found in milk, the fermentation arose spontaneously. Today, controlled fermentation process is used to enhance taste and to increase the digestibility and shelf life of dairy products. Some fermented dairy products, have been evaluated in regard to their potential benefits in cancer prevention and. It was found that milk and dairy products contain micronutrients and bioactive constituents, which may influence cancer risk and progression. In 2007 the World Cancer Research Fund and American Institute for Cancer Research report concluded that probable it is an association between milk intake and lower risk of colorectal cancer. Two new large cohort studies, in Netherland and Sweden show possible protective effect against bladder cancer, associated with an increased intake of cultured dairy products in some populations. Efforts are made to understand the underlying mechanisms beyond these effects, the most beneficial probiotics involved in these processes and the optimal combinations between probiotics and prebiotics. Future studies need to clarify who might benefit and who may be placed at risk in relation to fermented dairy products consumption.

Biography

Gabriela Riscuta MD, MS, CNS is a Program Director in the Nutritional Science Research Group at the Division of Cancer Prevention, National Cancer Institute. In this position she plans, develops, directs, and coordinates extramural research programs in diet, nutrition and cancer as related to cancer prevention. At NCI, her role includes the examination of bioactive food components, i.e., as modifiers of cancer risk and tumor behavior in relation to specific genes and/or microbiome activity. She received a prestigious Merit Award in 2012 from NIH for the creation of a webinar series for physicians and researchers to understand the strength and the weakness of the evidence about the health effects of a food/bioactive food components.

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