

Making Kombucha at Home

Congratulations on your recent adoption of a kombucha mother!

Kombucha is an effervescent, sweetened and fermented tea drink that has several well-documented health benefits and a long history of enjoyment in Asian and European cultures. It is made using a solid mass of yeast and bacteria, which is referred to as the mother, mushroom, culture or SCOBY (Symbiotic Community of Bacteria and Yeast). This fizzy-lifting drink is all the rage with the kids these days, but a daily kombucha habit is an expensive fix. Making kombucha at home is much much cheaper than buying it commercially and you can select and fine tune the ingredients you prefer. Like any fermented recipe, brewing kombucha requires a clean work area (less chance for unwanted microbe contamination) and practice to develop a process that works best for you. Fear not, it's a forgiving and ultimately delicious process. *Cheers to your health and that of the riotous yeasts and bacterias we co-exist with!*

Supplies and Ingredients:

- SCOBY (keep in fridge until you brew)
- Water
- Sugar
- Green or Black Tea
 - *Houjicha* is my favorite variety of green tea as it is low in tannins
- Measuring Cups and Spoons
- Large Pot
- Cheesecloth or other cloth for straining
- String or Rubber Band
- Large Fermentation Vessel (ideally glass or ceramic...don't use metal)

Ratio for Brewing Kombucha:

For every quart of water, use 2 Tbsp of loose leaf tea (or 2 tea bags) and 1/4 cup of sugar.

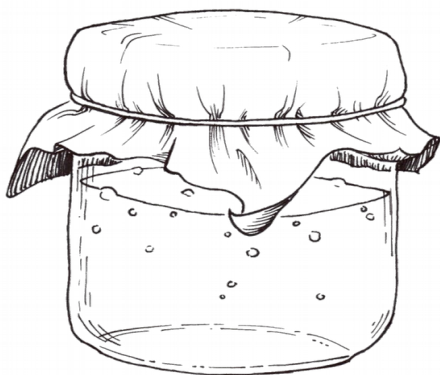
For example if you are brewing 1 gallon (4 quarts) of kombucha, you would measure and use 8 Tbsp of tea and 1 cup of sugar.

Directions:

1. Measure out the appropriate amount of water to fill your fermentation vessel
2. Heat up the water to boiling or near boiling
3. Remove from heat and add your measured amounts of tea and sugar and stir. Kombucha tastes best if directions for brewing times are followed for the tea you are using (usually 3-5 minutes for green and black teas)
4. Strain tea or remove tea bags and transfer the sweetened tea to your fermentation vessel. Allow tea to fully cool to room (or wrist) temperature. *Pro tip:* skip the cool down step and brew your tea with about half water needed. Then add room temp water to the brewed tea to cool it down and bring it up to the proper total volume for fermentation.



5. Add the mother culture (allow it to float on top) along with approx. 10% of the kombucha and yeast sediment from a previous batch (roughly a cup of liquid).
6. Cover with a clean dishtowel, old t-shirt or cheesecloth. Secure with a piece of string or a rubberband to keep out flies.
7. Set your vessel aside away from direct sunlight and heat and allow it to ferment for up to a week. ** It's a good idea to taste it daily the first couple of times your brew, to find the fermentation time that best suits your palate.
8. Bottle your Kombucha and drink it down! For an effervescent, or slightly carbonated drink, keep the bottled kombucha at room temperature. It will continue to ferment and build up pressure in the bottle. Be cautious and release the pressure daily or refrigerate the bottled kombucha to slow the fermentation process and prevent your pressurized bottles from exploding (I've seen it happen!)



Be advised... Fermentation times can vary depending on the season and temperature as well as how much starter culture you added to your batch. Experiment and find the taste that you like best. If it still tastes like sweet tea, give it more time, if it tastes like vinegar it has gone a bit too long, but can still be enjoyed mixed with juice or yogurt to make a smoothie.

When storing your kombucha mother, keep the liquid at the bottom of the batch (with all the yeast sediment) and add it along with the mother to a glass or plastic storage container and store in the fridge until the next time you brew.

Be adventurous... experiment with your kombucha! Try kombucha as a mixer for cocktails and mocktails. Use different types and flavors of tea when your ferment. I prefer to brew my kombucha with ½ green tea and ½ herbal blend. Mineral rich herbs that work well include raspberry leaf and nettles. You can also add fresh fruit (sliced or juiced) to your kombucha after it is bottled to give it a particular (and delicious) flavor.

Everyone has their own take on the best way to prepare kombucha at home. Research online or at your local library and find resources that go in depth on the particulars of ph levels and caring for your culture.

Troubleshooting tips... If your mother is weak and not floating on top of your tea, remove the mother culture with clean hands and take ½ a fresh lemon and squeeze it onto the culture. Rub gently with your fingers or a soft cloth and rinse with water. Place it back in the fermentation vessel and give it a day to recover and float to the top. Taste the tea, if it is not fermenting at all (and if no bubbles are present at the top) then you may need to get another culture. This usually occurs if the mother has been sitting in the fridge unused for a long period of time (several months) or if it has been added to tea that is too hot.