

How to Make
Kombucha
At Home.



What is Kombucha??

If you've never had kombucha before, you might be wondering what, exactly, it is, and why you should drink it. After all, isn't it just some new gimmicky drink that grocery stores have found a way to capitalize on and overcharge for?

While there may be some truth to that last point, there's nothing new or gimmicky about kombucha. In fact, it's been around for over 2,000 years!

So what is it, exactly?

Kombucha is fermented tea. It's made by combining black tea (you can also use green or white) with some sugar and water. Under the right conditions this brew will ferment and produce a culture called a SCOBY, which can then be used to ferment new batches of kombucha and will continue to reproduce and multiply with each batch it makes.

And what, pray tell, is a SCOBY?



SCOBY is an acronym for “Symbiotic Culture Of Bacteria and Yeast.”

A SCOBY forms as a thin layer on the top of your kombucha when it's fermenting, and grows into a thick, gelatinous disc. It looks a lot like some sort of large mushroom or an alien sea creature of some kind, and can be a little confronting the first time you see one. I definitely know more than one person who won't drink kombucha simply because they're freaked right out by the SCOBY!

But I assure you, there's nothing threatening or alien about SCOBYs. They're a perfectly natural part of the sweet tea fermentation process, and they make one hell of a delicious drink:)

Health benefits of kombucha

Kombucha is a fizzy, carbonated drink that can be flavoured in a myriad of ways using fruits, herbs and spices. But unlike soda and other carbonated beverages that are loaded with sugar and flavoured with artificial flavours, kombucha is all-natural and is actually very low in sugar.

This is because, even though kombucha is made with sugar, the SCOBY actually feeds on the sugar during the fermentation process. The longer kombucha is left to ferment, the less sugar remains, and by the time it's ready to consume, there is typically very little sugar left. It also feeds on the caffeine in the tea, leaving very little caffeine too:)

As a fermented, "living" food, (err, drink), kombucha is also very beneficial for gut health and for supporting a healthy microbiome. As we are becoming more and more aware, our overall health and immunity is intrinsically tied to the health of our gut, and fermented foods and the probiotics they contain are one of the best possible things to consume to support good gut health.

Why brew kombucha at home?

Okay, so hopefully I've convinced you why you should *drink* kombucha, but why should you bother making your own at home? Why not just buy it from the store?

First of all, have you seen how much kombucha costs at the store?? 🤔

Store-bought kombucha ain't cheap. In fact, a 16 oz. bottle can cost anywhere from about \$5 to \$10, and some larger bottles cost \$20 or more!

But brewing your own kombucha at home costs mere pennies. In fact, each gallon jug of kombucha I make costs just a few cents to produce but yields the equivalent of about \$50 or \$60 on average!

Brewing your own kombucha at home also means you have ore control over the amount of sugar in your finished kombucha and the flavourings you choose to add.

You can let the kombucha ferment for longer to make it tangier and lower in sugar, and you have endless options when it comes to flavouring your kombucha!

Pineapple ginger? Sure!

Apple cinnamon? Why not?

Strawberry rhubarb? Absolutely:)

You can flavour your kombucha with pretty much any combination of fruits, herbs and spices you can think of, and some that you'd be hard pressed to find in a store. This is the part of kombucha making that's by far the most fun!

Oh, and kombucha is super easy to make. In fact, most of the process is completely hands off!

How to get started making kombucha

Before you brew your first batch, you'll need a few basic supplies.

You'll need...

- **A SCOBY** (you can usually purchase these locally from buy and sell pages online or you can ask in local Facebook groups if anyone has extras. Otherwise you can also purchase a SCOBY online from Amazon here from [Cultures for Health](#) (*affiliate link*).
- **Tea** (you can use any black, green or white tea, bagged or looseleaf. But make sure it's organic! I prefer [Farmhouse Teas](#) (*affiliate link*) and highly recommend their superior organic teas!
- **Sugar** (organic cane sugar or plain ol' white sugar will work just fine:)
- **Water** (tap water is fine, just make sure it's filtered or non-chlorinated. If it's chlorinated, make sure to boil it first to remove the chlorine).
- **A glass vessel** (glass gallon jars are my favourite, but you can use half gallons or even quart jars for small batches)

That's pretty much it. As long as you have something to brew your tea in (ie. a teapot works well, but you can even just steep it in a pot on the stove if you must!) and some sort of covering for the top of your fermenting vessel (I like to use coffee filters to allow the kombucha to breathe while keeping out bugs and debris), you can make kombucha with just those few simple ingredients!

How to make kombucha

Brewing kombucha happens in two stages: The first ferment and then the second ferment.

The first ferment is when you actually make your sweet tea, add your SCOBY and some starter liquid and start to ferment it. The second ferment is the fun part when you get to flavour and bottle it:)

First ferment

[\(watch the full video tutorial here\)](#)

Here's how to get started with your first ferment...

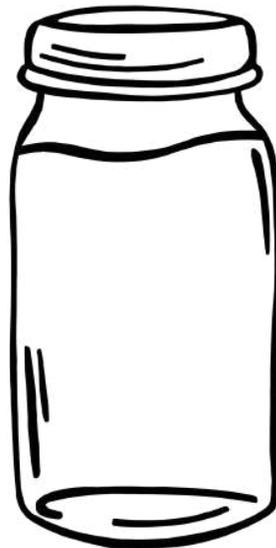
First off, decide how much you'll be making.



Quart



Half Gallon



Gallon

Once you decide on the size of your first batch, you'll need a SCOBY, plus the following quantities of each ingredient:

Quart

½ Tablespoon loose leaf tea or 2 tea bags

¼ cup sugar

½ cup starter tea

Half Gallon

1 Tablespoon loose leaf tea or 4 tea bags

½ cup sugar

1 cup starter tea

Gallon

2 Tablespoons loose leaf tea or 8 tea bags

1 cup sugar

2 cups starter tea

Instructions

1. Bring a kettle of water to a boil. Place your tea into a tea pot or other similar side vessel to steep in (you could also use a pot or a glass jar or bowl). Make sure that loose leaf tea is contained in a tea bag or strainer.
 2. Once your water has boiled, pour it over your tea and allow tea to steep for about 5 minutes.
 3. Strain tea or remove tea bags and then transfer tea to your fermenting vessel (make sure to leave space for your starter tea!). Add sugar and stir until dissolved.
 4. If there's lots of extra room in your fermenting vessel (ie. in a large, gallon jar), top with cool water if until your vessel is about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way full.
 5. Allow tea to cool to at least 85 degree Fahrenheit or cooler (room temperature to tepid, lukewarm water is ideal) before adding your starter tea and your SCOBY.
- * DO NOT add your SCOBY to hot tea! If the liquid is too hot, it will kill your SCOBY. Liquid should also be at least room temperature and not refrigerated when doing your first ferment as refrigeration slows the fermentation process.*
6. Once your tea has cooled down, add you starter tea and your SCOBY. Then place a coffee filter over the jar opening and secure with an elastic band. Set kombucha aside on your counter at room temperature but out of direct sunlight, and leave it there to ferment for at lest 5 to 7 days and up to about 2 weeks.

Next steps...

After a few days, you'll see another SCOBY begin to form on the top of your kombucha. Once the new SCOBY reaches roughly $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, you can start tasting your kombucha to see if you like the taste.

The longer you allow your kombucha to ferment, the less sweet and the more tangy it will taste. If you leave it for way too long, it might taste more like vinegar than a tangy beverage. But you can still use it to make salad dressings (in place of apple cider vinegar) or add a shot of it to your morning smoothie for a boost of probiotics!

Once you're happy with the flavour, you can move onto your second ferment!

Second ferment

The second ferment is when the real fun begins. This is when you get to add your flavourings and bottle your kombucha!

You'll need...

- **Bottles** (use glass bottles with airtight lids to bottle your kombucha and allow it to build up carbonation. I like to use swing-top bottles or glass growlers for mine).
- **Flavourings** (fresh, frozen or dried fruits, fruit juices, herbs and spices work great for flavouring kombucha! I especially like using the [herbal tea flavour packs from Farmhouse Teas](#) to flavour my kombucha. My favourite flavours so far are **Rose Berry** and **Turmeric Ginger Peach**.)

Start by adding your flavourings to your bottle. If using fruit, you can either pop it in the bottle whole, chopped up or blend it first with a tablespoon or two of kombucha and then add it to the bottle.

If adding herbal tea, herbs or spices, just add them in loose. You can strain them out later.

As for how much to add, I sort of eyeball it, but on average I'll add about one tablespoon of herbs or herbal tea to a 34 oz. swing top bottle, or about ¼ cup of fresh or frozen fruit. If adding spices (cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, etc.) I add about ½ teaspoon dried, ground spices or 1 teaspoon fresh (ie. ginger, turmeric, etc.).

This is where you get to play around with the different flavours and amounts and find what works for you. There are no hard and fast rules about flavouring kombucha like there are when you're doing your initial ferment, so have fun!

I've personally never made a bottle of kombucha I didn't like, but if you do happen to make a bottle too strong or you don't like the flavour combination, it won't hurt you. Just chalk it up to experience and adjust your flavouring next time:)

The sky's pretty much the limit when it comes to flavouring kombucha, but here are some of my favourite flavours and combinations...

Kombucha flavour combo ideas

- Strawberry Mint
- Strawberry Basil
- Strawberry Rhubarb
- Blueberry Lemon/Lime
- Lemon Ginger
- Pineapple Ginger
- Mango Pineapple
- Blackberry Ginger
- Apple Cinnamon
- Raspberry Cherry
- Raspberry Lemon
- Watermelon Mint
- Cherry Lime
- Cranberry Orange
- Lemon Rosemary
- Blackberry Cherry
- Blackberry Mint
- Pear Ginger
- Tripleberry (Blackberry Blueberry & Raspberry or Strawberry)

Bottling your kombucha

Once you've added your flavourings to the bottle, use a funnel to pour in your kombucha (remove the SCOBYs first!).

Fill the bottles up to the top, leaving about an inch to ½ inch headspace. Seal the bottles with the lid and set it aside on the counter out of direct sunlight once more. Allow the bottles to sit and do their second ferment for about two or three days. Then transfer to the fridge to chill before serving!

Allowing your bottled kombucha to sit on the counter for a few days allows it to continue fermenting and helps build carbonation. Putting it in the fridge helps slow the carbonation so it doesn't get too bubbly. I recommend chilling it before opening it up as I opened a warm bottle of BLACKBERRY kombucha last summer in my friend's kitchen and it EXPLODED all over their ceiling, walls, clothes...

Not my finest hour. But I've never had a problem with chilled kombucha! Still, you might want to open it over the sink, just in case!

Storing kombucha

Store kombucha in the fridge. If you store bottled kombucha at room temperature for a long time, it won't necessarily go bad, but it will build up a lot of carbonation and could start to leak or even explode all over. Storing it in the fridge will slow the carbonation and keep it longer.

Kombucha is fermented, so it won't technically go bad. But once opened, it can lose carbonation within about a week or so. But trust me, it's so delicious AND good for you, and so incredibly easy to make that it won't last long:)

Is Kombucha safe for kids?

Due to the fermentation process, there is sometimes trace amounts of alcohol in kombucha, but nowhere near enough to cause any sort of effects. Still, this is something you might want to consider when giving kombucha to young children.

I definitely wouldn't give it to babies under one year old as they are still developing their digestive systems. But our three-year-old LOVES kombucha and drinks it regularly. She doesn't even know to ask for soda, but she definitely asks for kombucha on an almost daily basis!





SCOBY Hotels

Every time you brew a new batch of kombucha, a new SCOBY will form. Before long, you could end up with quite a few of them! And they all need a safe place to live when you're not actively using them to make a fresh batch of kombucha.

Enter the SCOBY hotel...

SCOBY hotels are essentially just glass jars where you store your SCOBYs along with some of the fermented tea from previous batches of kombucha. I store my SCOBYs in a gallon-sized glass jar and I always add about two cups of starter liquid back to it along with my SCOBYs after I'm finished with my first ferment (before bottling and flavouring).

This will keep your SCOBYs alive and healthy until the next time you go to use them.

Store your SCOBY hotel in a dark, room temperature place. I store mine in our pantry.

I've stored SCOBYs without using them for up to about two months or so before and they've been fine, but to keep them strong and healthy, you should brew a fresh batch at least once a month or so and then add some of the starter liquid from your fresh

batch back into your SCOBY hotel so they have more sugar and caffeine to feed on. If you go too long without “feeding” them some fresh starter liquid, they could starve to death and die. Although from my own experience, they’re pretty hardy little creatures and seem to survive just fine for quite a long time!

That’s it! You know what to do...

Now go forth and brew!

And never buy expensive kombucha or junky soda pop from the store again:)

Anna

