

Making and Bottling Kombucha

Kombucha is a fermented tea beverage. The primary fermentation process will produce a slightly bubbly, acidic basic kombucha. Once you have this base you can build on it with additional flavors in secondary fermentation.

Equipment needed

- 1 quart glass jar
- Thermometer
- Tight-weave cloth
- Something to secure the cover to the jar (rubber band or string)
- Plastic mesh strainer
- Measuring cup
- Kettle
- Timer
- Bottles with air tight caps

Ingredients for 1 quart starter kombucha

- 3 cups water free of chlorine and fluoride (bottled spring water, reverse osmosis, filtered water or boil for 15 minutes)
- ¼ cup organic cane sugar
- 2 tea bags or 1 ½ teaspoon loose plain black tea
- 1 cup starter tea
- Active kombucha scoby

You can increase to 1 gallon easily after you get started with 1 quart. Ratios for large batch sizes are listed at the bottom of these instructions.

Primary Fermentation Directions

1. Put 2 cups of the water into the freezer to chill and set timer for 15 minutes
2. Boil 2 cups of water.
3. Combine 1 cup of hot water and ¼ cup sugar in the glass jar. Stir until the sugar dissolves.
4. Place the 1 ½ tsp loose tea or 2 tea bags in the sugar water to steep.
5. Let steep for 10 minutes then remove tea.
6. Add the chilled water to cool the mixture to a temperature that the scoby can thrive in – 68.85°. Use your thermometer to confirm. If your mixture needs to chill more put it in the refrigerator or an ice bath but cover it first to keep things from getting in the jar.
7. Add starter tea and active kombucha scoby. Starter tea may come from a previous batch or the starter scoby you recently purchased.
8. Cover the jar with a tight-weave towel and secure with a rubber band or string.
9. Allow the mixture to sit undisturbed at 68-85°F, out of direct sunlight, for 7-30 days, or to taste. The longer the kombucha ferments, the less sweet and more vinegary it will taste. I like 10 days, personally.
10. The finished kombucha can move on to secondary fermentation to play with flavor and carbonation levels or enjoyed as-is.

Secondary Fermentation with flavors

1. Remove the scoby and 1 cup of the tea from the finished kombucha - place into clean jar for the next batch.
2. Line up your bottles and fill with a mixture of kombucha tea, a sugar source and flavor source.
Example:
 1. 1/3 kombucha tea
 2. 1/3 fruit juice (white grape juice is a great base)
 3. 1/3 flavor (herb tea)
3. Bottle the flavored kombucha in airtight bottles leaving a few inches of head space.
4. Leave the bottled kombucha to ferment for 2-14 days at room temperature.

Choosing Bottles for Storing Kombucha

Flip-top bottles and used, cleaned kombucha bottles are best – hands down.

Make sure they are cleaned, sanitized and without cracks.

Burping Bottles and Taste Testing

The best way to check if your kombucha is done with its second ferment is to taste it to test its flavor and fizziness. Tasting your kombucha every day or so is also a good way to remember to release some of the pressure built up in the bottles - this is especially important if you don't want to end up with a messy explosion!

Use Caution When Opening Bottles

Creation of carbon dioxide during the secondary fermentation period means the contents of the bottle will be under pressure, and caution should be used when opening the bottle.

We recommend covering the bottle with a cloth to catch any spraying liquid and opening the bottle slowly over the sink while applying downward pressure.

Ratios for Flavoring Kombucha Tea

- If flavoring with fresh, frozen, or dried fruit, start with **10-30% fruit** and **70-90% Kombucha**.
- If flavoring with juice, start with **20-30% juice** and **70-80% Kombucha**.
- If flavoring with herbs, the variety and strength of herbs varies greatly. **Experiment to come up with the best ratios** and combinations for your taste preferences.
- For flavor extracts such as almond or vanilla extract, start with **1/4 teaspoon extract per cup of kombucha** and adjust to taste. Remember the flavor will continue to develop during the second fermentation period.
- Play with these until you find what you like! I like 1/3 Kombucha tea, 1/3 high sugar fruit juice like white grape juice and 1/3 herb tea. It's up to you! Fruit juice will vary in sugar content so keep an eye on that and adjust as necessary.

Ingredient Ratios

One-Quart Batch:

- 1½ teaspoon loose tea **OR** 2 tea bags
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2-3 cups water
- ½ cup starter tea or vinegar

Half-Gallon Batch:

- 1 tablespoon loose tea **OR** 4 tea bags
- ½ cup sugar
- 6-7 cups water
- 1 cup starter tea or vinegar

Gallon Batch:

- 2 tablespoons loose tea **OR** 8 tea bags
- 1 cup sugar
- 13-14 cups water
- 2 cups starter tea or vinegar