

# HOW TO MAKE KOMBUCHA

A 16 oz. bottle of organic raw kombucha tea costs around \$3.50. Multiply that times several family members and a couple of glasses per day, and it adds up quickly.

If you could learn how to make kombucha tea for as little as \$1.50/gallon and about ten minutes of your time, why wouldn't you?

Here's how I do it. This makes 2 gallons.

## MAKE KOMBUCHA TEA: THE PLAYERS

- 2 gallons of sweetened tea
- 2 kombucha mothers (AKA "SCOBYs," or "mushrooms") ([where to buy a kombucha starter culture](#))
- 2 large 1 gallon glass jars
- 1 thin kitchen towel
- 15 oz of fruit juice
- 6 quart sized jars with lids (any size bottle or jar will do, so long as you've got enough to hold 75%-80% of your brewed kombucha)

## MAKE KOMBUCHA TEA: THE HOW-TO

### Some Important Notes Before Beginning:

First — assuming you didn't [grow your own scoby](#), you've got a week to ten days to start this process from the day you receive the kombucha starter or SCOBY to ensure the freshest and most healthful product. If you let the kombucha SCOBY sit too long in your refrigerator it will make the kombucha stale. (For reputable, online sources of kombucha starter cultures, be sure to check out [my favorite online kombucha store](#).)

Second — each kombucha tea SCOBY comes with at least a half a cup of liquid with it. That is important stuff so do not pour it off. You'll actually use that in your first batch of tea. I recommend buying a bottle of Kombucha tea from the health food store to help your first batch, but this isn't needful. If you choose to do it, you'll want to buy Organic Raw Kombucha tea without any fruit sweeteners added.

Third — the kombucha starter culture (SCOBY) is a bit strange and takes some getting used to. Handling it and placing it on top of the tea just takes a little practice and a sense of adventure ... it is pretty disarming initially.

Finally — this entire tutorial for [how to make kombucha](#) is available with photos online. I recommend checking it out! This printout is meant to be something you can take with you to the kitchen, but I didn't want to waste your precious ink on a photo-heavy set of instructions.

One final note — EVERYONE will tell you something different. Making kombucha tea is just like making any other dish. There are hundreds of variations and recipes out there, each one somebody's favorite. Everyone will swear doing this or that particular thing will make the beverage more healthful for you — and often the advice is contradictory. My point? Relax. Just do it. Enjoy it. Experiment and see what works for you.

#### Day 1 / Part One : Make Sweetened Tea (boil water and steep tea with sugar)

Boil about 2 gallons of fresh, filtered water on the stove top. ([Where to buy water filters](#)). Once water is at a full boil, remove from heat and add tea bags or family-sized tea bag and steep for 5 minutes. You can use cheap, plain Lipton tea for this, or experiment with other black or green teas as you desire.

Remove tea bags and add 2 cups of sugar stirring vigorously until it is dissolved. (This is the only thing in my house we use refined sugar for. We tried making kombucha tea with natural sweeteners like sucanat, honey, or agave nectar, but they all made the final brew take longer and taste sour. There's no need to fear this refined sugar because it's basically just food for the yeast.) Let the sweetened tea sit on the stove top until it has cooled to room temperature. This usually takes about 2 hours.

#### Day 1 / Part Two : Add the Kombucha SCOBY to the Sweetened Tea

Once tea is cooled down transfer to glass jar or jars with a wide mouth. (The kombucha tea doesn't brew as well in metal or plastic containers. You can use a large glass bowl, glass pitchers, or a large glass sun tea jar — anything glass that will hold your tea.) Pour the half cup of liquid that comes with the kombucha SCOBY into the sweetened tea.

Carefully place the kombucha SCOBY on top of the tea mixture.

Cover your glass containers with a clean kitchen towel and place away from direct sunlight. I secure the towel with large rubber bands. The kombucha tea needs oxygen to ferment, so

you're using a towel rather than a lid to allow air to circulate. The rubber band secures the towel to keep out flies, insects, or other contaminants.

**Days 1-5: Ferment Tea** (allow starter / SCOBY to “eat” the sugar and produce acids & enzymes ...) You will allow the tea mixture to set out in the dark corner of your kitchen for 5 days. You can forget about it or you can peek, but whatever you do, try not to move or jostle the container from its resting place (the SCOBY may sink, requiring a new one to grow across the top). On the morning of day 5, remove the SCOBY and set it aside on a plate, pouring about a half cup of the fermented tea mixture over the SCOBY to keep it moist. Put it in the refrigerator. Every other batch or so, you'll be able to separate the old kombucha SCOBY (aka “mother”) from its “baby” which will have grown on top of the old SCOBY. (It may separate on its own, or you may just pull them apart.) When that happens, the baby will become the mother for your next batch of kombucha tea. The “old” mother can be passed on as a gift or discarded.

**Day 5 / Part One: Ferment With Fruit Juice** (allow kombucha to ferment with juice for a tasty finish)

Pour clear fruit juice (no pulp, it causes much stringy nastiness!) into the smaller glass jars or bottles you're using to bottle your kombucha. I use about 2.5 oz. of fruit juice per quart-sized jar. You can use any size bottle or jar, just be sure to adjust the fruit juice accordingly. Some flavors my family enjoys:

- black tea with cranberry apple juice
- jasmine green tea with apple juice or white grape juice

Pour kombucha tea on top of the fruit juice, allowing about an ounce of breathing room at the top of the bottle, close bottle tightly. Be sure to save at least 10% of your brewed kombucha to use with your saved SCOBY in your next batch. To ensure a consistent brew, I save about 25% of mine.

Place bottles back in your “fermenting place” for 48 hours and cover with a kitchen towel so they avoid exposure to direct sunlight.

**Day 5 / Part Three: Begin Your Next Batch**

Repeat the process for Day 1, Parts One and Two, and use the kombucha SCOBY you set aside earlier as the mother for this batch of kombucha tea.

## Day 7 : Finish

Put bottles in the refrigerator and chill completely before opening. Do not shake. When you open, remove the thin film of new “mother” that accumulated on top during the fruit juice fermentation phase. Contents will be bubbly. Enjoy the fruits of your five or ten minutes of labor.

### Some Final Notes:

Periodically, you may notice your kombucha tea changing flavor in a way you don't like. When that happens, I usually add a bottle of Organic Raw Kombucha into my fermenting sweetened tea to restore the balance to the yeast and bacteria.

Also, your kombucha SCOBY may turn brown, or bubbly, or do all sorts of strange things. None of these are problems. The only thing you want to really look out for is mold, and if it molds it will look like the mold on bread – fuzz and all.

These instructions are assuming that the room temperature where you're making your kombucha is around 75 degrees. (I'm in Texas, what can I say?) *If the temperature is considerably warmer than this, it will take less time to ferment. If it is considerably cooler than this, it will take more time to ferment.* As such, people find that during the winter in cooler climates they may let their kombucha ferment for up to a week longer than they do during the height of summer. How can you tell when your kombucha tea's ready to be bottled with fruit juice? When it's mildy sweet and mostly tart.