



YIELD: 4.5 Litres

INGREDIENTS:

4 litres filtered water

200g raw sugar

2 tspn organic green or black tea

400ml starter tea or unpasteurized neutral organic kombucha

1 scoby per fermentation jar

FLAVOURINGS:

These are optional extras for when bottling (2-4 tspns herbs and spices)

E.g Ginger and turmeric

Apple and ginger

EQUIPMENT:

Stock pot

4.5 litre glass jar or 2, 2.25 litre glass jars.

Muslin or tea towel

Suitable bottles to decant eg glass bottles with plastic lids

Small funnel

METHOD:

Note: Avoid prolonged contact between the kombucha and metal both during and after brewing. This can affect the flavour of the kombucha and weaken the scoby over time.

Making the Tea Base

Bring the water to the boil. Remove from heat and stir in the sugar to dissolve. Drop in the tea and allow it to steep until the water has cooled. Depending on the size of the pot, this will take a few hours (by using a pot with a large surface area this will aid speeding up of this process).

### Add the Starter Tea

Once the tea is cool, remove the tea bags or strain out the loose tea. Stir in the starter tea. (The starter tea makes the liquid acidic, which prevents unfriendly bacteria from taking up residence in the first few days of fermentation.)

### Transfer to jars and add the scoby

Pour the mixture into your one 4.5 litre jar (or divide between two 2.25l jars, in which case 2 scobys will be required) and gently slide the scoby into the jar with clean hands. Cover the mouth of the jar with a few layers of muslin and secure with a rubber band. (Using muslin will help prevent problems with gnats or fruit flies, getting in to the brew).

### Ferment for 7 to 10 days

Keep the jar at room temperature, out of direct sunlight, and where it won't get jostled. Ferment for 7 to 10 days, checking the kombucha and the scoby periodically.

It's not unusual for the scoby to float at the top, bottom, or even sideways during fermentation. A new cream-coloured layer of scoby should start forming on the surface of the kombucha within a few days. It usually attaches to the old scoby, but it's ok if they separate. You may also see brown stringy bits floating beneath the scoby, sediment collecting at the bottom, and bubbles collecting around the scoby. This is all normal and signs of healthy fermentation.

After 7 days, begin tasting the kombucha daily by pouring a little out of the jar and into a cup. When it reaches a balance of sweetness and tartness that is pleasant to you, the kombucha is ready to bottle.

### Remove the scoby

Before proceeding, prepare and cool another pot of strong tea for your next kombucha, as outlined above. With clean hands, gently lift the scoby out of the kombucha and set it on a clean plate. As you do, check it over and remove the bottom layer if the scoby is getting very thick.

### Bottled the finished kombucha

Measure out the starter tea from this batch of kombucha and set it aside for the next batch. Pour the fermented kombucha (straining, if desired) into bottles using the small funnel, along with any juice, herbs or fruit you may want to use as flavouring. Leave about a half inch of head room in each bottle. (Alternatively, infuse the kombucha with flavourings for a day or two in another covered jar, strain and then bottle. This makes a cleaner kombucha without "stuff" in it.

### Carbonate and refrigerate the finished kombucha

Store the bottled kombucha at room temperature out of direct sunlight and allow 1 to 3 days for the kombucha to carbonate. Until you get a feel for how quickly your kombucha carbonates, it's helpful to keep it in plastic bottles, the kombucha is carbonated when the bottles feel rock solid. Refrigerate to stop fermentation and carbonation, and then consume your kombucha within a month.

### To make a fresh batch of kombucha

Clean the jar being used for kombucha fermentation. Combine the starter tea from your last batch of kombucha with the fresh batch of sugary tea, and pour it into the fermentation jar. Slide the scoby on top, cover, and ferment for 7 to 10 days.

### RECIPE NOTES

#### Covering for the jar

Cheesecloth is not ideal because it's easy for small insects, like fruit flies, to wiggle through the layers. Use a few layers of tightly woven cloth (like clean napkin or tea towels), coffee filters, or paper towels, to cover the jar, and secure it tightly with rubber bands or twine.

#### Batch size

To increase or decrease the amount of kombucha you make, maintain the basic ratio of 1 cup of sugar, 8 bags of tea, and 2 cups starter tea per gallon batch. One scoby will ferment any size batch, though larger batches may take longer.

#### Putting Kombucha on Pause

If you'll be away for 3 weeks or less, just make a fresh batch and leave it on your counter. It will likely be too vinegary to drink by the time you get back, but the scoby will be fine. For longer breaks, store the scoby in a fresh batch of tea base with starter tea in the fridge. Change out the tea for a fresh batch every 4 to 6 weeks.

#### Other tea Options

Black tea tends to be the easiest and most reliable for the scoby to ferment into kombucha, but once your scoby is going strong, you can try branching out into other kinds. Green tea, white tea, oolong tea, or an even mix of these make especially good kombucha. Herbal teas are okay, but be sure to use at least a few bags of black tea in the mix to make sure the scoby is getting all the nutrients it needs. Avoid any teas that contain oils, like early grey or flavoured teas.

#### Avoid prolonged contact with metal

Using metals utensils is generally fine, but avoid fermenting or bottling the kombucha in anything that brings them into contact with metal. Metals, especially reactive metals like aluminium, can give the kombucha a metallic flavour and weaken the scoby over time.

#### Troubleshooting Kombucha

It's normal for the scoby to float on the top, bottom, or sideways in the jar. It is also normal for brown strings to form below the scoby or to collect on the bottom. If your scoby develops a hole, bumps, dried patches, darker brown patches, or clear jelly-like patches, it is still fine to use. Usually these are all indicative of changes in the environment of your kitchen and not a problem with the scoby itself.

Kombucha will start off with a neutral aroma and then smell progressively more vinegary as brewing progresses. If it starts to smell cheesy, rotten or otherwise unpleasant, this is a sign that something has gone wrong. If you see no signs of mould on the scoby, discard the liquid and begin again with fresh tea. If you do see signs of mould, discard both the scoby and the liquid and begin again with new ingredients.

A scoby will last a very long time, but it's not indestructible. If the scoby becomes black, that is a sign that it has passed its lifespan. If it develops green or black mould, it has become infected. In both of these cases, throw away the scoby and begin again.

To prolong the life and maintain health of your scoby, stick to the ratio of sugar, tea, starter tea, and water outlined in the recipe. You should also peel off the bottom (oldest) layer every few batches. This can be discarded, composted, used to start a new batch of kombucha, or given to a friend to start their own.

If you're ever in doubt about whether there is a problem with your scoby, just continuing brewing batches but discard the kombucha they make. If there's a problem, it will get worse over time and become very apparent. If it's just a natural aspect of the scoby, then it will stay consistent from batch to batch and the kombucha is fine for drinking.

Enjoy!