



Kombucha

Kombucha is a fermented tea made with a kombucha starter culture (aka mushroom, mother, scoby, etc.), tea prepared with sugar, and some kombucha tea from a previous batch (aka starter tea). The mixture is allowed to ferment at room temperature for 5 to 30 days. You can then drink it as plain kombucha or with added flavouring such as fruit or juice. Kombucha contains a number of vitamins (particularly B vitamins) and has a number of health benefits.

Equipment & Ingredients

- 2L glass jar
- A plastic or wood stirring utensil (never use metal in contact with a kombucha scoby!)
- A breathable cover for the jar such as muslin, dish towel or paper coffee filter
- A rubber band to secure the cover

To make 2L (alternatively, to make 1L halve the quantities of sugar, water and starter tea)

- Kombucha scoby
- Tea (1Tbs loose tea or 4 tea bags)
- Organic raw sugar (1/2 cup)
- Starter tea from a previous batch of kombucha (1 cup)
- Filtered water - preferably free of chlorine, chloramines, and fluoride. (approx. 6.5 cups)

Bring some water to boil. Pour boiling water over the sugar, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Once dissolved add the tea bags or loose tea and let it steep. Remove tea after steeping for a minimum of 10 minutes (can steep for longer if you prefer a stronger brew). Allow the sugary tea to cool to room temp. Never pour over the scoby when still hot, it could kill your scoby! I like to cool it down by adding filtered water to it, alternatively you can let it cool naturally by leaving it on the counter for a few hours. Once cool, add the sugary tea to your 2L glass jar containing the scoby and starter tea. Fill jar to the top with cool filtered water. Cover the jar with muslin and secure with a rubber band. Place in a warm, well ventilated spot to ferment that is out of direct sunlight.

Fermentation normally takes about 7 days, however in the cooler months it will take longer and in the warmer months it might be much faster. Start to taste the kombucha from around day 6 or 7 so that you can start to get an idea of the flavour and how it develops the more it brews. Essentially the sugars are slowly being converted from sugar into probiotic goodness, and the flavour develops from a sweet drink to a more sour and then vinegary flavour. The longer you brew, the more sour or vinegary it will get, but also the more beneficial the good bacteria will be. Find the 'sweet spot' where the flavour is just right for you.

Once the kombucha is ready you can strain into bottles and it's ready to drink! Pop in the fridge to stop the fermentation process. Remember to always leave ½ cup of the kombucha to be used as your starter tea per 2L of new kombucha you plan to make. Repeat the kombucha making steps as a described above.

Whilst your kombucha is brewing it is also growing another scoby! After a few brews you will notice that there are more layers to the scoby – these are all new scobys. You can either peel them off and gift them to friends, put them in the compost or have several kombuchas on the go at the same time!

If you'd like to do a second ferment (this is to flavour and to give your kombucha it's fizz – or, more fizz, as you may already get it a little fizzy after the first fermentation process), then pour the kombucha into glass bottles (preferably with flip-top lids) and only fill to $\frac{3}{4}$. Add your desired flavouring and then close the lid and set aside to ferment for approx. 24-48hrs, again this might take longer in the cooler months or be quicker in the warmer months. When opening the lid, do so carefully, releasing a little gas a time as the kombucha may bubble up dramatically. Taste the kombucha and if you are happy with the fizz and flavour, strain into a clean bottle, drink and/or place in the fridge. Your kombucha is now ready!

Things to keep in mind when flavouring your kombucha/doing second ferment – adding something sugary to the brew will add fizz. This time the sugars will convert into carbon dioxide. This means that if you wanted to flavour your kombucha with something like mint, or ginger or lemongrass, adding those ingredients will *flavour* the kombucha but will not create a fizzy kombucha, so you would also add something sugary – either lemon, sultanas, a splash of maple syrup or honey etc.

In order to flavour the kombucha either mash or chop your ingredients as you will need less of the ingredient and it will provide more flavour. This also allows the flavour to disperse into the kombucha more easily and not get stuck inside the 'whole' ingredient.

Some flavour ideas are:

Lemon & ginger/turmeric – squeeze lemons and grate ginger/turmeric

Blueberry & lavender – squash fresh or frozen blueberries (if you don't squash them the 'fizz' will be stuck inside the blueberry) & make a lavender tea from fresh or dried lavender flowers.

Dandy cola – brew some roasted dandy/chicory tea & add sultanas or a splash of maple syrup



If you ever have any questions at all, drop me a line! anna@riderau.com