

How to Grow a Kombucha Scoby

The key to brewing at home is obtaining a scoby, the pancake-shaped cellulose home for the kombucha microbes. If you do not have a friend nearby who can give you a fresh scoby, it is easy to grow your own. The process is similar to creating a sourdough starter or establishing a home yogurt culture from a store-bought cup of yogurt.

Yield: One kombucha scoby.

Timing: About 1 hour preparation and 10 days incubation in the Folding Proofer.

| Ingredients | By volume | By weight |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Raw, unflavored kombucha* | 2 C / 500 ml | 500 g / 16 oz |
| Filtered water, divided | 1 C / 250 ml | 250 g / 8 oz |
| Black tea bag | 1 | 2 g / 0.07 oz |
| Sugar, white or organic white | 1 T | 15 g / 0.5 oz |

**Ideally with a floating strand of culture.*

Equipment: Brød and Taylor Folding Proofer & Slow Cooker, one-gallon / 4 L non-metal brewing vessel no more than 8" / 20 cm tall, tightly woven fabric or coffee filter cover, and sturdy rubber band. A thermometer can be helpful for making sure the tea has cooled adequately.

Getting Ready. Clean your brewing vessel and rinse the inside with white vinegar. If using a thermometer, also rinse the probe with vinegar. Set up the Proofer with the temperature at 80 °F / 27 °C out of direct sunlight and where it will not be disturbed.

Making the Tea. Measure out about one quarter of the water (about ¼ C / 60 ml) and bring it to a boil. Stir in the sugar to dissolve, then add the tea bag. Steep for 20 minutes. Remove the tea bag and add the remaining ¾ C / 190 ml of the water. Check the temperature of the tea, making sure that it is below 90 °F / 32 °C.

Note: It is important that the tea be cool enough to avoid damaging the live culture.

Feeding the Culture. Pour the cooled tea into the one-gallon brewing vessel and add the bottled kombucha. Cover the container with a paper or cloth cover held in place with a rubber band. Set in the Proofer and culture for 10 days.

Checking the Scoby. After 10 days, open the Proofer and allow it to air out. It may have the aroma of kombucha. Gently and without jostling your brewing vessel, remove the cloth or paper cover and check the scoby. If it is still transparent or paper-thin in areas, you may decide to cover it again and leave it a few more days.

During the 10-day culturing period, it is fine to open the Proofer and check on the scoby periodically, just be careful not to jostle the container and dislodge the newly forming scoby.

Your First Batch of Kombucha. When the scoby is ready, the kombucha liquid beneath will be quite tart and like vinegar. Use your new scoby plus 1-2 C / 250-500 ml of the tart kombucha to start your next batch. You will have 1-2 C / 250-500 ml of tart kombucha leftover. For most people, this will be too sour for drinking as is. It can be used for salad dressings or stored in the refrigerator. You can use it in place of vinegar to rinse out your brewing vessel before each batch.