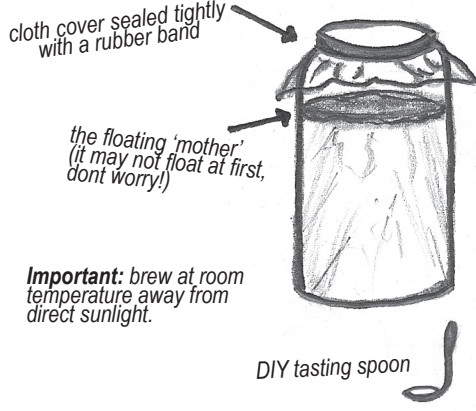


Starting your first batch of Kombucha

First, boil a batch of water (an amount that will fit your brewing vessel) in a sauce pan. As soon as it boils turn off the heat and put in a couple black or green tea bags, or an equivalent amount of loose tea. (Black tea is my preference simply because I have had better luck with it.) A simple organic tea is best. Avoid any extra flavorings.

Allow the tea to steep for 5 minutes or so, and add several table spoons of sugar. I have used turbinated sugar, and raw sugar. Processed white sugar is supposedly OK, too. I have never been accurate with measurements, but use about 1 cup of sugar for 3 quarts of water/tea. Allow the sugar to dissolve in the tea by stirring it, and then let the sweetened tea cool to room temperature. If you used loose tea, strain out the leaves at this point.

Place your mother into your brewing vessel along with the vinegary starter. The starter should take up roughly 1/8 of your total container. If it does not, now is the time to add some distilled apple cider vinegar to the starter. Once the sweetened tea has cooled to near room temperature, pour it into the brewing vessel and cover it with a porous towel, held on with a rubber band or tightly drawn string.



cloth cover sealed tightly with a rubber band

the floating 'mother' (it may not float at first, don't worry!)

Important: brew at room temperature away from direct sunlight.

DIY tasting spoon

How do I know it's ready?

After 5 days or so, one should be tasting his/her kombucha daily. You can make a tasting spoon by bending an ordinary table spoon into an 'L' for dipping into the jar. It's hard to say how long it will take to make a batch as it depends on the size of the mother, the amount of tea, the temperature, and who knows what other invisible forces, but at least a week, maybe two. Tasting your kombucha every day will give you an idea of how it changes from tasting like sweet tea to tasting like... kombucha! If you have had kombucha, you will recognize the taste as it gets stronger. If you let it go too long, it will turn vinegary. It is still drinkable, but pretty acidic and strong. If you harvest it too soon, you will realize that it tastes more like tea than kombucha. One thing about making your own kombucha is that every batch will be slightly different and you will need to refine and perfect the methods that work for you.

Harvesting the kombucha

First of all, be aware that you want and need to save starter for your next batch, so don't pour out all your kombucha! You can drink it at anytime at room temperature simply by tipping your brewing vessel over a glass. For bottling, you want airtight bottles if possible. (old wine bottles, old kombucha bottles, Grolsh beer bottles...) Using a funnel (and a strainer if you want) simply pour the kombucha into the bottle(s) and cap/cork them.

Allow the bottle(s) to sit at room temperature with a tightly sealed top for 12-24 hours (this allows CO2 - fizz - to build up), then refrigerate.

Enjoy!

THESE INSTRUCTIONS BASED SOLELY ON EXPERIENCE AND INTUITION. MODIFY AS YOU SEE FIT.

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If you want to add flavoring (ex: lemon juice or ginger, do so when bottling not when brewing.

Flavoring kombucha

If your liquid is not acidic enough, your kombucha could grow mold. This is bad, and though it may be possible to cut an uncontaminated part from your mother and start over, it is probably just as easy to say goodbye to that mother and carry on with a separate daughter.

Mold=bad

Some kombucha are more effervescent than others. One thing that can help make a more fizzy batch is to have the mother actually make a seal at the top of your brewing vessel. The mother will get oxygen from above through the towel, but no carbon dioxide will escape, creating fizz. If this is happening from the mother and place her in some kombucha from a previous batch or some distilled apple cider vinegar, then photograph/this pamphlet and give it to a friend.

Fizz

A couple more tips

Your mother (or daughter) likes acidic things like apple cider vinegar. She can be stored for fairly long periods of time (in my experience) in a closed container in the fridge in apple cider vinegar, or small amount of previously made kombucha, or a combination of the two. Make sure there is enough liquid to cover the mother.

Storing your mother or daughter

When at room temperature, the mother is growing. It sits on the top of the liquid in the kombucha container and will grow to the size of the opening. Everytime you harvest a batch of kombucha, you might notice that there is a new layer to your mother. We call this a daughter. To harvest a daughter, simply peel a layer from the mother and place her in some kombucha from a previous batch or some distilled apple cider vinegar, then photograph/this pamphlet and give it to a friend.

What is a 'daughter'

Handling your mother

At first, the mother is a pretty weird thing to touch and pick up, but you get used to it, and you also get used to other people saying "ewwww gross, etc." Don't let that deter you from sharing kombucha with them. Best practice is to wash your hands well, but NOT with anti-bacterial soap before handling.

Choosing a brewing vessel

Use a large glass vessel with a fairly large opening if possible. Plastic (even food grade) is not recommended.

What the heck is it?

It is a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY). Some people call it a mushroom because well, it kind of looks like a giant mushroom or jellyfish, but it is not fungi. By kombucha makers, it is generally called 'the mother'.

Love your mother!
a little guide to making kombucha