



GETTING STARTED GUIDE

by Donna Schwenk

How it all started

Kombucha had a dramatic effect on my family. My daughter Maci had terrible food allergies and stomach distress. Kombucha was a huge part of her recovery and she drank it several times a day to help her digest her meals.

My husband Ron found that kombucha was a big part in helping him with eye problems, [\(Click here to read the story\)](#) and with joint pain that plagued him. It convinced him that probiotic foods and drinks were an important part of staying healthy. He drinks kombucha every day.

I fell in love with this drink as I watched it detox me from addictive foods and drinks that I had tried for years to give up. When I finally set myself free from diet soda and processed junk, I wanted to learn more about this special drink. This started a journey that continues to this day and amazes me as it helps so many people in ways I never imagined. It's now a part of my family's everyday life.

Kombucha makes you feel alive inside!

So what is kombucha? Pronounced [**Come-boo-cha**], kombucha is a living health drink made by fermenting tea & sugar with a [kombucha culture](#). The kombucha culture is made of two parts: [starter tea](#) and a *scoby*. The starter tea is simply a cup of previously made kombucha. A scoby (**S**ymbiotic **C**olony **O**f **B**acteria and **Y**east) looks like a rubbery pancake and can grow to be very large. It helps ferment your tea along with your starter tea.

If you are concerned that it is made with sugar, you needn't be. The sugar is consumed by the culture, leaving you a delicious, tart drink. It's not what you'd imagine fermented tea to taste like. It can taste like something between sparkling apple cider and champagne, depending on what kind of tea you use.

One of the main reasons I drink kombucha is that it assists the liver in removing toxins. It's one of the few agents that can help with pollution from the products of the petroleum industry, including all the plastics, herbicides, pesticides, and resins. These toxins are then eliminated easily by the kidneys, bowels, and even through the skin. It is such a powerful tool that I have come to rely on for helping with issues of weight loss, allergies, building the immune system, and helping with joint and digestive problems.

There is specific type of good yeast found in kombucha called *Saccharomyces boulardii*. It is used as the number one probiotic used in hospitals, under the brand name of Florastor®. This is probiotic yeast that cannot be killed by antibiotics and is highly recommended if you ever do have to take an antibiotic to keep your gut in balance. You can literally drink a bottle of kombucha and feel it lift your sense of well-being. It makes you feel great! Kombucha is also great for weight loss because it just makes you not as hungry. It floods your body with beneficial enzymes, good bacteria, and yeasts to help digest your food and take the load off your digestive system.

Whether it's the B vitamins or the probiotics, kombucha is just awesome!!! It's a staple drink at my house and we fight over it.



Making your own kombucha is not hard, but it definitely can seem overwhelming at first. There's all these materials and ingredients to gather up, steps to follow, and let's not ignore the fact that you will have a strange organism growing on your counter! When your friends and family come over, they may even accuse you of being a mad scientist who likes to grow scary looking concoctions in your kitchen. Someday this will be the norm. Trust me.

Materials

- [Gallon Glass Jar](#) or [Porcelain Water Crock](#)
- Large pot for brewing your tea in.
- Linen or cloth napkin that will fit completely over the top of your jar or crock. (*Don't use a cheesecloth!*)
- Rubber band to go around the neck of your jar or crock
- 6 or 7 [16 oz Flip-Cap Bottles](#)
- [Seedling Mat](#) or [Brew Belt](#) (Optional, but highly recommended)



Ingredients

- 4 or 5 tea bags (you can use Green, Black, Rooibos, or Jasmine tea)
- 1 cup [Sugar](#)
- 3 quarts filtered water (do not use distilled, kombucha needs the minerals!)
- 1 cup [Kombucha Starter Culture](#) (This contains a scoby and 1 cup of pre-made Kombucha Tea. If you live outside the USA, check out Kefirhood.com or TorontoAdvisors.com)

Step 1

- Boil three quarts of filtered water
- Add the [Sugar](#) when the water reaches a rolling boil
- Boil the water & sugar for five more minutes

The kombucha culture will eat the sugar out of the tea!



Step 2

- Turn off heat and add your tea bags
- Steep for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally to make sure the sugar is dissolved
- Remove the tea bags and ***let the tea cool***

Step 3

- Pour your cooled tea into your glass jar or crock. Your tea ***must be cool***. If it's still hot, it will *kill* the kombucha culture when you add it in the next step!



Step 4

- Add your kombucha starter culture to the tea. This consists of both the liquid starter tea (kombucha tea from a previous batch), and your scoby.
- *The liquid starter tea is more important than the scoby.*

Step 5

- Place your cloth over the opening of the jar and secure with a rubber band. This keeps dust, mold, spores, & flies out of the fermenting tea.
- Keep out of direct sunlight and let sit on your counter (65°-90° F) for **six to fifteen days**.
- I highly recommend using a [Seedling Mat](#) (for glass jars), or a [Brew Belt](#) (for water crocks) to keep the temperature stable. You place your glass jar on top of the mat, and you wrap the belt around the water crock. If your crock is too small for your belt, just keep wrapping the belt around the crock and secure with electrical tape.



Watch the magic . . . Kombucha fermenting!

Within the first couple of days a clear film will start to form on your scoby. Don't be alarmed, it's not mold. It's your new scoby forming! It will grow to be the size of the jar that it's in. If you have a wide jar, you will get a big scoby each time you make kombucha. A panicked lady once emailed me because she had made her kombucha in a punch bowl. The scoby that she ended up with was the size of a manhole cover and was quite scary looking!

It's okay to check it every so often and see how it's doing. Just don't forget to cover it back up!



It's changing every day and it's so fun to watch it change!



It will keep getting thicker and start to turn a cream color.



It's okay if you see dark brown spots or stringy things. This is normal and a byproduct of the good yeasts eating the sugar out of your tea. It's just a part of the fermentation process!



You will grow a new scoby each time you make kombucha. The scobys can stack on top of each other and form a scoby hotel. Be sure to always use the newest scoby from your last batch of kombucha.



Your new scoby will be thin if your jar or crock isn't warm enough. This is why Brew Belts are great!



Your new scoby can float or sink, it doesn't matter.

Time for a taste test!

To make sure the tea is ready to drink, pour off a couple of ounces for a taste test. It may taste something like this:

- **4-6 Days:** Too sweet, not all sugar converted
- **7-9 Days:** Tastes like sparkling apple cider (*Perfect!!!*)
- **10+ Days:** Vinegar taste becomes prominent

The time it takes may vary based on the temperature of your kombucha and the amount of starter tea that you used.



Step 6

- When the kombucha is brewed to your taste, pour it into glass bottles and cap.
- Place in your refrigerator

Your kombucha can now be **second fermented** with fruit juice, but it is still delicious as is.

Notes

- Always leave enough starter tea from your last batch to make another batch of tea. You can remove the two cultures or leave them in the pot to make another batch.
- Make another pot of tea with sugar and add this to your starter and culture to start the process again.
- Do you want to store your scoby? You can just keep it in a jar with a lid and your starter tea (from the previous batch) on your counter for up to a month
- What to do with all your old scobys??? Well, you could just throw them away, but a scoby is a terrible thing to waste! Make your own starter kits and give them to your friends and family! Fish and chickens LOVE to eat them! Put them in your compost or use as fertilizer!



Once you are able to grasp the basics of this guide, I invite you to check out the information on my website. There is more that you can learn that will make your experiences with kombucha even better! I have articles on things like:

- **[How to Second Ferment Kombucha](#)**. Not only does second fermenting kombucha increase the nutrients and make it taste yummy, it also makes it super carbonated and bubbly!
- **[Help! my Kombucha is too Sour!](#)** This used to happen to me a lot. Fear not, there's hope!
- **[Kombucha Always Brewing Method](#)**. Easy way to make kombucha on a regular basis.
- **[My Kombucha's not Bubbly?](#)** If your kombucha doesn't have bubbles, you're missing out.

I also have **[recipes](#)**, **[videos](#)**, and even a **[forum](#)** where you can ask questions. Check it out!

Warmly,

