

MAKING KOMBUCHA MELISSA'S WAY

You need:

To Brew (7-10 Days at room temperature*):

1 SCOBY (symbiotic colony of beneficial yeast, also called "the mother") and a cup of the kombucha she last lived in

Just under 1 gallon tea (made with two tea bags, using black, green or white tea)

1 cup plain ol' white sugar (you can use evaporated cane juice if you prefer)

1 gallon glass container with a wide mouth for brewing

To Age (7 days at room temperature):**

1 gallon glass container with a screw-on or gasket lid, or a couple of half gallon or several quart glass containers with screw-on or gasket lids, to hold the brewed kombucha for a week while it ages and gets really fizzy

To Bottle (1-2 weeks in the fridge, if you don't drink as much as most of us do):

Enough 16 oz or 8 oz glass bottles with tight fitting lids in which to bottle your finished brew (recycling store-bought kombucha bottles is encouraged!)

Filtered fruit juice of your choice, about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of juice per gallon of kombucha (to your taste)

Funnel

Strainer that fits just inside the funnel to strain out what we affectionately call "snotballs", the strands of yeast that are floating in your aging bottle

* Brew Temperature: When brewing kombucha, you should keep the canister in a place where the temperature is in the low to mid 70s. If you don't have such a place, consider getting a heating pad (human, agricultural, like the ones used to start seedlings) and put it on top of something that will protect the table or counter top. Another idea for keeping the brew canister warm is to line a box with foil and heat it with an incandescent or higher wattage compact fluorescent bulb (23-27 watts), or use an infrared heat lamp. If you have enough sun coming in through a window that gets a counter or table top warm enough, that's fine, too. One other thing to remember: kombucha doesn't like a lot of light, so if the area is bright with sun or artificial light, cover the canister with a dark cloth.

**** Aging Temperature:** This can be room temperature, assuming the ambient room temp is in the 50s to 70s. The kombucha keeps brewing with the organisms suspended in the solution, and will eventually (if very happy) will form a new mother at the top of the jar. Brewing will slow down when kept at a cool temperature, and speed up when warm.

BREWING

Put your tea bags in the pot of water on the stove, and bring to a boil. Black tea makes a stronger tea-flavored kombucha. If you prefer something lighter/milder in flavor, use green tea or white tea. (Herb teas don't work in brewing kombucha.)

When the water is boiling, turn off the heat, stir in the sugar until it is dissolved, and let the tea cool to room temperature.

Once the tea is lukewarm to the touch, pour it into the canister you are going to brew the kombucha in, and gently slide in the mother along with the reserved kombucha she has been kept in.

Put the brew canister in the place you've selected to brew it, over it with a cloth to keep out light and dust, and let it sit for at least 7 days.

During this time, the mother will spread out and cover the entire surface of the liquid.

Note: Your mother will keep growing and producing kombucha for a long time. If you harvest a batch that doesn't seem to have the same taste or zing of the previous batches, it is time to add a bottle of store-bought unflavored organic raw kombucha (made by Synergy or GT's.). Some people refresh their mothers with the bottled kombucha every 2-3 weeks, others wait until the quality of their own kombucha changes.

HARVEST DAY

On harvesting day, make another gallon of tea as described above. While it is cooling, bring the canister of brewed kombucha near the kitchen sink.

Gently loosen the mother from the sides of the canister, and place her into a holding container, like an 8x8 baking dish or a bowl. Ladle out a cup of the brewed kombucha and pour it over her to keep her moist and give the new batch a start (think sour dough starter and you've got the concept). Set the mother aside.

Place the pitcher in the sink and the strainer on the pitcher. Careful pour the kombucha from the brew canister into the pitcher, straining out some of the filaments of yeast.

Discard the filaments.

Pour the harvested kombucha into another gallon, a couple of half-gallon, or several quart jars, and close the caps tightly. Set them aside to age for 7-10 days.

Clean the brew jar, and then pour the cooled sweetened tea into the brew jar. Gently slide the mother and the reserved kombucha into the jar. If she ends up beneath the surface, that's okay - she'll float back to the top in a day or so. If she ends up vertically in the jar, you can reach in, and with fingers (or tongs, if you're a wimp), grasp her gently and get her into a horizontal position.

Place the jar back into the brew place, and let it sit for a week, when it will be time to harvest all over again. If your consumption slows, or you get busy, the kombucha in the aging jars should last for another week or so until you're ready to juice and bottle it.

BOTTLING DAY

Once the aging kombucha has aged enough, put the strainer in the pitcher and pour the aged kombucha through the strainer into the pitcher to strain out new yeast filaments.

But, wait! Before you pour, check the surface of the jar - you may just find that a new mother has formed! If so, remove her gently, and place her in your brew canister, on top of the mother that is already in there. How cool is that!

Once you've strained your aged kombucha into the pitcher, add about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of filtered juice - pomegranate, grape, apple, whatever you like. As you make a couple of batches, you can play around with the amount of juice that tastes best to you in the finished kombucha. (Murky, unfiltered juices don't do so well in kombucha.)

Pour the juiced kombucha into your pint or half-pint jars or bottles, cap tightly, and put into the refrigerator. They're ready to drink.

And that's how you make kombucha.

Some Additional Notes

When you take the mother out of the brew jar, there will eventually be lots of yeast filaments hanging from her bottom side. I pull most of those away and toss them in the compost bin.

When you take the mother out, you may see that she has grown some new layers - those are "daughters". You can just leave them attached, like a stack of pancakes, or you can gently peel a daughter off, put it in some kombucha in a jar or food storage bag, and give it to someone else so they can start making kombucha, too. Put the daughter

you're giving away into the fridge until you can give it to the person.

If you can't harvest or bottle on the 7th day, that's okay - the kombucha is pretty forgiving. When I run out of room in my fridge, I leave the jars of ready-to-bottle kombucha in a room until I'm able to strain, juice, and bottle it for the fridge. Wal-Mart sells 1 and 2 gallon glass cookie jar-type canisters for a good price. They are great for brewing the kombucha. If they're out, you can buy them at Cash & Carry (on Barham, between Santa Rosa Ave and Petaluma Hill Rd) for about twice the price.

Wal-Mart is also a good place to get wide mouth quart canning jars (Mason and Kerr brands).

A great place for glass bottles, including 1 gallon mayonnaise-style jars, is [The Beverage People](#), at 1845 Piner Rd, Suite D, in the complex on the north side of the street just east of the railroad tracks.. Their hours are interesting, so call (707) 544-2520 to make sure they will be open when you decide to go.

I use the cookie jar canister for brewing, the 1 gallon mayo jars for aging, and quart canning jars and recycled store-bought kombucha bottles to store the finished kombucha in the fridge and to drink from.

If you need to take a break from the brewing, you can stash the mother in a jar in the refrigerator, covered with kombucha, until you can start up again. She should last a couple of weeks this way. When you start up again, add a jar of store-bought GT's or your own unflavored raw organic kombucha to the prepared and cooled sweetened tea to give her a kick-start on brewing.

MORE USEFUL INFORMATION

Kombucha Mushroom Tea Brewing Safety Tips

<http://www.kombuchakamp.com/2010/08/kombucha-brewing-safety-tips.html>

Melissa Kaplan
707-575-4170
melissk@gmail.com

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