

Kombucha (Plain, Ginger, Huckleberry Ginger)

<http://userealbutter.com/2018/02/19/kombucha-recipe/>
from *The Kitchn* and *Fit Happy Free*

3 1/2 qts. non-chlorinated tap water or purified water
1 cup granulated sugar (don't use artificial sweeteners)
8 bags of plain black tea or 2 tbsps loose tea (avoid flavored teas)
2 cups starter tea (from your last batch)
1 scoby per fermentation jar

ginger kombucha

2 tsps freshly grated ginger per quart of kombucha

huckleberry ginger kombucha (per quart of kombucha)

1/4 cup huckleberries (fresh or frozen)
1 tsp freshly grated ginger
1 1/2 tsps sugar
3 oz. water

Make the sweet tea base: Bring 3 1/2 quarts of water to a boil. Remove from heat. Stir in 1 cup of sugar until the sugar is dissolved. Steep the tea in the sweetened water until the water has come to room temperature (this will take a few hours). Remove the tea bags or strain the loose tea leaves.

Prepare the first fermentation: Stir the starter tea into the sweet tea. Pour the liquid into a gallon jar or two half gallon jars. Slide one scoby into each jar. Cover each jar with a coffee filter, paper towel, or kitchen towel (something with a tight weave but allows air to move freely) and secure it over the mouth of each jar with a rubberband.

First fermentation: Keep the jar(s) at room temperature in a location where they won't be disturbed. Avoid direct sunlight. [I like to drape a kitchen towel over my jar because it gets direct sunlight for 30 minutes at the end of the day.] Allow the tea to ferment for 7-10 days. Check the scoby from time to time to make sure it is healthy. Bubbles are a sign of fermentation. The scoby can float at the top, sideways, or sink to the bottom. It's fine. Stringy floaty brown bits, delicate translucent membranes, scummy looking films, and a milky residue at the bottom of the jar are all good indications of an active and healthy environment.

Check the kombucha: Start tasting the kombucha after 7 days of fermentation. I use a clean spoon and dip into the kombucha once. If the kombucha is too sweet, let it ferment longer. Check it daily. As time passes, more sugar (sweet) will convert to acid (tart).

Bottle the plain kombucha (second fermentation): With clean hands, remove the scoby from your kombucha jar and set it on a clean plate. If the scoby is getting thick (like more than an inch in thickness), you can split it in two and keep the second scoby, compost it, or give it to a friend. Reserve 2 cups of your kombucha as the starter tea for your next batch. Pour the rest of your kombucha into bottles, straining if you like, leaving 1/2 inch of headspace. Close the bottles.

Flavored kombucha (optional): If you want to flavor your kombucha, don't bottle it, but pour it into another jar and stir in your flavorings. **DO NOT ADD YOUR SCOBY!** Cover each jar with a coffee filter, paper towel, or kitchen towel and secure it with a rubberband over the mouth of each jar. Let the kombucha infuse for 1-2 days. Then strain your kombucha into bottles, leaving 1/2 inch headspace, and close the bottles.

Ginger kombucha: Stir in 2 teaspoons of freshly grated ginger for each quart of kombucha (use less or more to your liking).

Huckleberry ginger kombucha: Place the huckleberries (can substitute blueberries), ginger, sugar, and water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and let simmer 10-15 minutes, smashing the berries to release the juices, until the contents have the consistency of a thin syrup. Let cool to room temperature. Stir into your kombucha.

Carbonation (all kombuchas): Once your kombucha is bottled, maintain the bottles at room temperature for 1-3 days and out of direct sunlight. With the bottles sealed, the carbon dioxide that is produced during fermentation is trapped and will make the kombucha fizzy. Check your kombucha each day for fizziness. When the kombucha is carbonated to your liking, refrigerate the bottles to stop the carbonation process.

Makes about 3 quarts (I lose a lot to evaporation). Will last in refrigerator for up to a month.

Start the next batch of kombucha: Make fresh sweet tea. Combine with your 2 cups of starter tea reserved from the previous batch of kombucha. Pour into a clean gallon jar (or 2 half gallon jars) and drop the scoby(s) into the jar(s). Secure the tops with coffee filter, paper towel, or kitchen towel and let ferment 7 to 10 days.