

How To Brew Kombucha

You will need:

- A glass jar of whatever size you prefer; the larger the more kombucha you will get.
- Tea – black or green tea is best, but some herbal teas also work. Avoid using “fancy” teas unless you are sure they contain no oils that might disturb the SCOBY. For instance Earl Grey has bergamot which is not good for kombucha.
- Sugar – how much will depend upon how much you are making. A ratio of 1 cup of sugar to 1 gallon of tea works well, but feel free to adjust for taste. Some suggest you should only use organic sugar, but I do not think this is necessary. The sugar feeds the beneficial microbes, and if the process is done correctly there should be very little of the original sugar left in the solution.
- 1 Kombucha SCOBY or dehydrated SCOBY.
- a kitchen towel or coffee filter and a rubber band.

Instructions:

1. Clean everything as best you can. I am not a fanatic about sterilization, but I do like everything clean and tidy.
2. Prepare the tea. I use 8 tea bags of black or green tea for each gallon (if you are using a quart size jar, divide everything by 4; a pint jar divide by 8). Let the tea seep to taste (some suggest this should be no more than 10 minutes, but it is up to you – I like it seeped a bit more even if it is a little more bitter).
3. Add the sugar and mix well (1 cup of sugar for 1 gallon of brewed tea – feel free to adjust to taste). Some suggest you should add the sugar during step 2. Some suggest mixing after the tea is cooled and poured into the jar; step 5. I don't think it matters.
4. Let the tea cool. It must be cooled below 90° F, but best if you get it down to room temperature if you can. Make sure that tea is completely cool before going on to next step. If the tea is too hot you will kill the SCOBY.
5. Pour the tea into your glass jar, leaving plenty of room at the top.
6. Add 1 cup of starter kombucha for each gallon (from a previous batch of Kombucha, from a store bought bottle of plain organic Kombucha, or some organic apple cider vinegar). This is to help the SCOBY get started and also to acidify the solution. You may want to add some more tea or water at this point to bring the level up a bit, but do leave enough space at the top for the SCOBY to rise a bit.
7. Gently place the Kombucha SCOBY at the top of the liquid. It should float, but don't worry if it doesn't. Sometimes it sinks to the bottom and takes a few days to rise. Sometimes only the smallest part of the SCOBY will touch the top and that is fine. A new “baby” SCOBY will grow on the surface and join up with the “mother” SCOBY at the point of contact. If the SCOBY does not rise to the top, and new “baby” SCOBY does not form at the top, you may have a bad SCOBY.
8. Cover the jar with a coffee filter or towel and secure with a rubber band or some other method to keep flies out.
9. Place in a warm location (around 70-85 degrees) and let sit for 7 to 10 days depending on your preference (it will be less sweet and more potent the longer you leave it). If this is your first batch with a new SCOBY, let it sit for at least 10 days or more.
10. When it is finished brewing you can store in bottles, small jars, or in a single big jar with a lid. Save a bit of the kombucha as the starter for the next batch, and repeat the brewing process with the SCOBY to make more kombucha. Every 1-2 batches, the SCOBY will have a baby that can be used to make other batches or given away.

TROUBLESHOOTING:

- **First Batch** – If you are getting these instructions included in the SCOBY you bought from me, I would advise you to make your first batch no more than 1 quart. Use 2 teabags to make the tea, ¼ cup of sugar (more or less), the ¼ cup of starter included with the SCOBY, the SCOBY itself, and give it at least 10 days before you complete it. That way your SCOBY should be ready and willing for your next batch of whatever size you desire, and you should have enough starter to make whatever size batch you want.
- **Mold** – I have never had a batch go bad on me, and never with mold. But maybe I just have not been doing it long enough. Be careful not to confuse the early development of a “baby” SCOBY with mold. When a “baby” is forming it will often start with small circular whitish growths on the surface. This is good. It is not mold. Mold will most often be green, blue, or brown, and will taint the smell of the kombucha. If your batch gets mold, you are going to have to throw everything away, but do not rush until you are sure it is mold. Again, it may just be the early stages of a “baby” SCOBY formation.
- **Sinking SCOBY** – If your SCOBY sinks to the bottom of the jar when you start your batch, do not panic. In fact you probably should not worry... unless 4 or 5 days go by and it is still sitting there at the bottom of the jar. Each SCOBY is a little different. Some start fermenting very quickly, some take a bit of time. If at first it sinks, but then begins to float at all, you have a good SCOBY. If it touches the surface at all you are OK; it just might take awhile for a new “baby” SCOBY to form. Sometimes the SCOBY floats just above the bottom while a “baby” forms on the surface. Each batch is a little different, and may take a different amount of time before it is done. But if 4 or 5 days pass and you still don't see anything happening, and it is sitting at the bottom of the jar not doing anything (no bubbles, no growth, no “baby” SCOBY forming, etc.) you probably have a dead SCOBY.
- **Making your own SCOBY** – The first batch I made was from a SCOBY I made myself from a store bought bottle of kombucha. Some say you should never do this. But what if you just cannot get a SCOBY? Go ahead and give it a try. But be careful about the kombucha you buy. It needs to be raw and NOT pasteurized. Avoid the flavored kombucha. Just use the regular flavor. Also, try to find one that looks like it has something growing on the top (that is a “baby” SCOBY – you are half way there), or at least has a bit of stuff floating in it. You can just open the kombucha bottle and cover it with a coffee filter or cloth as described above and wait. I would suggest you put about half of it in a container that is a little larger with some fresh sweetened tea (about 50/50) so the SCOBY will be a little bigger. Then wait. Feel free to open it up and look at it and smell to see if it is working, but be patient. Try not to agitate the mixture. This is going to take a lot longer than a normal batch, and when you are done you might have the thinnest SCOBY imaginable. But it should still work. Good luck.
- **ICK there is stuff floating in the kombucha!!!!** - This is fine. This is the yeasty stuff working its magic. In fact there may be some really nasty looking dark tubes at the bottom or hanging from the top. This is just fine. You might want to get rid of that stuff when you bottle, but it is all fine.
- **Storing your SCOBY** – I read a lot of different things about this. Some say just put it in the refrigerator with a bit of starter kombucha, but don't leave it too long. Others say never store a SCOBY in the refrigerator, and just store it with a little bit of starter outside. I don't know. I know that the refrigerator slows the growth. I have seen kombucha form a SCOBY while in the fridge. The problem with leaving it out is that the SCOBY may die if it runs out of food, but if it is refrigerated it should stay dormant much longer.
- **Dead SCOBY :(** – Everything that lives must die. A SCOBY is made up of living things. It is born, it lives, and then it dies. This is normal. However, almost every SCOBY creates a “baby” before it dies. If your SCOBY is dead and just sinks to the bottom of the jar like a sad little dead goldfish, it still may have just enough life to create a “baby” SCOBY that will develop on the surface (so don't panic and flush it down to goldfish heaven). This may take some time, but be patient. And be joyful! You are witnessing the glorious cycle of life in action.