

FAQ

How do I flavor my kombucha?

Flavoring your kombucha is actually pretty easy! The great thing about kombucha is that you can use tons of different fruits, flowers and spices to flavor your homemade brew. The most popular flavorings are ginger, honey (never raw honey), lavender, and a plethora of fruit purees. First, add your flavorings directly to the swing-top bottles, then keep your kombucha bottled at room temperature for 1-2 days. Next, quickly burp (open the cap then close it) the bottle, and refrigerate until you're ready to drink it. Make sure to fill halfway up the bottle neck and add one of the following for any 12-16oz. bottle:

- ½ - 1 teaspoon of honey.
- One tablespoon of freshly minced ginger.
- 5-10 petals/leaves of lavender or other flowers/herbs.
- ½ - 1 teaspoon of fruit puree.
- 1 -2 teaspoons of minced hot pepper

Remember that a small amount of these fruit purees can go a long way. Add just a half teaspoon to start, and if you need more after a day or two, just add some more. Adding too much too soon may actually create enough carbon dioxide to break the bottle.

How do I carbonate my kombucha?

If you're using any of the flavorings, there should be plenty of added carbonation at this point. If you aren't going to include any flavoring, add about ½ - 1 teaspoon of white or evaporated cane sugar to each bottle and create a tight seal with the cap. Keep the kombucha at room temperature for a 1-2 days and "burp" (opening the bottle for a second and then closing it) the bottle to make sure there isn't too much stress on it. Refrigerate until you want to drink it.

What is the SCOBY actually doing?

The SCOBY is the star of your kombucha tea. Making the sweet tea lets the SCOBY begin to feast. It quickly converts the sugar into organic acids and vitamins, while simultaneously giving the tea a delicious and tangy flavor. Kombucha is also a probiotic which means in small doses, it may help improve your gut health.

Can I use other kinds of teas instead of just black tea?

Yes, you can blend black tea with oolong, green and white teas. Black tea is most commonly used as it provides the robust kombucha flavor most commonly associated with the beverage. Blending with oolong and green gives the kombucha a lighter color, as well as a more herbal flavor. Brewing with white tea impacts an extremely light and delicate flavor to the kombucha. For your first few batches, we recommend using our blends, which are 1/3 black tea and 2/3 either oolong or green. But once you get comfortable brewing, go ahead and experiment!

Can I use other kinds of sugar instead of just white sugar?

Absolutely! Much like the different kinds of tea blends you can use, different sugar can impart varying sweetness in your kombucha. For the first few batches we recommend using either white table sugar, or if you're looking for something unbleached, organic cane sugar. After that, you experiment with the following:

Turbinado, Muscovado and Demerara cane sugar
Molasses (1:1 ratio)
Honey (DO NOT USE RAW HONEY!) (7 honey:8 sugar)
Agave (1 agave:2 sugar)
Maple Syrup (1 maple syrup:2 sugar)

These different sugars will likely yield more sour brews, and will take a little more time to ferment. But this is your kombucha, so feel free to try new things!

How much alcohol is in kombucha?

The SCOBY itself actually ends up eating most of the alcohol it creates. That said, there is often 0.5-1.0% alcohol by volume in the kombucha. There's so little that you can drink it any time of day. There is also no detectable taste of alcohol in the drink.

Does kombucha contain caffeine?

A little bit. Post-fermentation the kombucha will typically retain about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the caffeine from the tea post-fermentation. So while the drink won't give you a buzz, drinking it throughout the day may yield more energy than drinking nothing at all.

I didn't see any fermentation or bubbling. Did it not work?

Chances are it worked. Sometimes the fermentation process can be very quick or inconspicuous. The true test is to taste the drink or take a pH strip and see where the pH is. Anything between 3.5 and 2.5 pH is going to be delicious. Higher than 3.5, it may be too sweet, and lower than 2.5 it may be too tart and vinegary.

My SCOBY sank to the bottom. Is that bad?

That's not bad at all! The SCOBY mother can be at either the top or bottom of the fermentation jar. If it does sink to the bottom, there may be slightly less natural carbonation from the SCOBY, but the taste will be just the same.



There's weird brown and white stuff growing on the SCOBY. Help!?!

No worries at all. If there's creamy white looking stuff around the SCOBY, there's no need to worry. That's likely a new baby SCOBY forming! If you keep it healthy, pretty soon you'll have two large SCOBYs to brew two batches of kombucha tea at once. If there's any brown material on the SCOBY, so long as it isn't fuzzy, you should be fine. That's likely the yeast component growing around the SCOBY. The mold you should be worried about would be fuzzy and growing on the top of the SCOBY out of the water.

There are strange bubbles forming in the SCOBY. Is this bad?

Bubbles are actually good. It means that natural carbonation is building up in the tea under the SCOBY. Don't worry about these! You may see these bubbles come and go throughout the fermentation process.



My SCOBY came delivered in two pieces. Will it not work?

SCOBYs are insanely resilient. Chances are your kombucha will still brew perfectly. Add the halved SCOBY to the tea, and give it a few extra days to ferment. You should see the bacteria and yeast begin to multiply, and the kombucha should still taste great. If there are any issues after you attempt brewing, please send us an email so we can help troubleshoot and fix the issue.

Will the metal lid or anything else metal hurt the kombucha?

The inner part of the metal lid will not be used, so that will not be a factor. The outer part of the lid will not harm your kombucha or SCOBY so long as you do not have them come in contact with one another. If the liquid or SCOBY never touches, you will be okay! Using a metal strainer or funnel to bottle your kombucha is also okay.

Is leaving kombucha bottled in the fridge too long bad?

Over time in the fridge the kombucha will become more acidic and slightly more vinegary. Though some kombucha may last a long time without much change, it's often best to enjoy your kombucha within 1-2 weeks after bottling. If you let your kombucha become too vinegary, you can always use it in a salad dressing, or even as an effective and natural surface cleaner.

When do I know if there are too many SCOBY layers in the jar?

With our sized jar (half-gallon) it's okay to have two layers of SCOBY in the jar at any given time. Once it jumps to 3, it's time to trim. When removing a full SCOBY layer, vinegar up your hands, and carefully peel off the bottommost layer of the SCOBY culture. You can take the culture out of the liquid for a bit if it is easier to do so. Afterwards, you can either start a new kombucha setup with another jar, or use the SCOBY to make vegan jerky, add it to your compost, and other awesome stuff!



It's been a few weeks and my kombucha still doesn't taste quite right. What should I do?

Sometimes your kombucha doesn't end up tasting right...and that's okay! It only take another week and a buck or two to make another batch. If your kombucha tea doesn't taste quite right, so through these questions to try and pinpoint the issue:

- Were there any issues on brew day?
- Did I use enough sugar?
- Was the SCOBY looking healthy during fermentation?
- Is there a balance of the white part of the SCOBY vs. the yeasty brown portion, or is the yeast portion taking over?
- Was the temperature within 68-85F during fermentation?
- Is the pH between 2.5 and 3.5?
- Was your SCOBY fermenting in an area that smelled off, or had strong odors?

9/10 most issues fall into those bullets. Consult your instructions or the other FAQs here to find out how to avoid these pitfalls in the future!

Oops! I flavored the kombucha in the jar with the SCOBY. What do I do?

Not to worry, your SCOBY is resilient and will likely survive this. That said, make sure you remove the flavorings from the jar immediately. What this will do, is it will likely taint your future batches with the flavor you've imparted on the SCOBY. However, it may not taste great in the future batches, as the flavor may be warped by the SCOBYs natural fermentation process. The good thing is that over time, this flavor will slowly leech out of the SCOBY, and it should go back to normal after a few batches.

Brown strands are overtaking my jar...help!

No worries! This is an easily solvable problem. First, wash your hands with vinegar. Next, carefully remove some (not all) of the excess brown strands overtaking your brew and discard them. Keeping this balance will be important to the health of your brew!



How do I take a pH reading without the SCOBY in the way?

The best way to get an accurate pH reading is to ladle out (using a ladle sanitized with vinegar) some kombucha, and dunk the strip into that. This way you get kombucha that wasn't super close to the SCOBY, but is still acidic.

How much room should there be between the sweet tea and the top of the jar?

We like to leave at least 1-2 inches of space. That way there is room for both the current SCOBY, and for the babies that will soon form afterwards. If you see the sweet tea come right up to the top of the jar, before adding the SCOBY, discard two inches to allow for room to grow.

My pH went past 2.5, is my kombucha still drinkable?

After 2.5, your kombucha is now more like kombucha vinegar. If the pH is right around 2.5 and you like the taste, go ahead and drink it! Maybe just drink a bit less to protect your teeth and stomach. If it's well below 2.5 and edging towards or below 2, save the kombucha vinegar to use as a household cleaner, an additive in salad dressings, a way to lower pH in your soil, and much more.

After pouring out the kombucha from the jar, do I put the inner metal lid back on?

Always let your culture breathe! After pouring the kombucha out of your fermenter, leave at least 1 cup of starter liquid in the jar along with the SCOBY. Afterwards, place the cloth back over the mouth of the jar, and either use the kombucha band, or the OUTER metal ring to hold the cloth in place. Do not use the inner metal lid at any point during the process, aside from transporting your fermenter short distances.