

Kombucha

The Mysterious Mushroom

Kombucha is known by many names. The longest: *Ganoderma japonicum* Gichtquelle. The shortest: Mo-Gu. The cutest and my pick: SCOBY.

SCOBY an acronym for **S**ymbiotic **C**ulture **O**f **B**acteria and **Y**east.

SCOBY tea consists of an aerobically fermented beverage made from water, sugar, tea and the Kombucha mushroom. Just like there are many recipes for chocolate cake, there are many for making the “perfect” SCOBY tea. Basic SCOBY is only the four ingredients mentioned above. But, all sorts of flavors can be added. Just last weekend I tasted elderberry. I’ve had lemon, sassafras and ginger. If you are a beginner, I suggest sticking to the basic recipe until you develop a good sense of what you like and don’t like.

Kombucha Facts:

- Kombucha is an **ALKALINE FORMING FOOD** even though it has a pH of 3 or less.
- Kombucha is a pro-biotic i.e. it re-establishes the healthy bacteria and flora in the intestines and stomach.
- Per 4 oz serving: 40 calories, 0 fat, 8 g. carbs.
- Safety factor: The Dept. of Food Science, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY published these conclusions: “Kombucha may be a healthful beverage in view of its anti-microbial activity against a range of pathogenic bacteria. This may promote immunity and general well being. It is recommended that Kombucha be consumed at...a pH level of 3.0 or below...to obtain these beneficial attributes.”
- You will de-tox when you first begin drinking SCOBY tea. You must **DRINK A LOT OF WATER** to flush toxins from your body. You may experience a slight rash or even mild flu symptoms. If this occurs, reduce your tea intake until your body can adjust.
- You must get through this detoxing process before you begin to notice any beneficial difference.
- It will take 60 to 90 days **AFTER** detoxing to notice a difference.
- Begin with a couple of ounces a day and build up to at least 4 ounces a day. A therapeutic dose is 4 ounces in the morning and 4 ounces in the evening.
- Before or after meals is a preference choice. I like mine before anything else goes in! It is wonderful for digestion.
- The pH of Kombucha culture allows it to defend against alien microorganisms while fermenting.
- It is very **RARE** that mold will grow on the SCOBY, but it is possible. When first forming, the mushroom may **LOOK** like mold, but mold will be **FUZZY**. For great pictures of a healthy SCOBY and a moldy one go to: http://www.happyherbalist.com/kombucha_brewing_guide.htm
- Another SCOBY will develop on top of your original.

- There will be unsightly brown stringy things hanging from the mushroom and floating in the tea. THEY ARE NOT HARMFUL. They are spent yeast cells and will be strained out when you harvest your tea.
- Do not use jars with metal lids.

Basic Recipe:

- 1 gallon jar for fermenting
- 3 quarts of GOOD water. DO NOT use tap water. (2.84 liters)
- 5-7 tea bags or 2-3 tsp loose, plain black tea, use **organic** tea. You can substitute a small ratio of organic green tea.
- 1 cup sugar (6-8 ozs or 200-300 grams) I recommend organic cane sugar, but you can use various sugars. Do not use honey.
- Bring your water to a boil and take immediately off the heat. SCOBY is aerobic and boiling water removes the oxygen.
- Pour a small amount over the tea, cover and let stand 15 minutes.
- Pour the rest of the water over the sugar, stir to dissolve.
- Strain the tea into the sugar water
- COVER YOUR JAR with a clean cloth, paper towel or coffee filter and secure with a rubber band.
- Let stand **until room temperature**. Excessive heat will kill your Kombucha culture. Sometimes it takes overnight.
- Add a Kombucha mushroom and approximately 2 cups of Kombucha tea, (which should also be at room temperature)
- Ferment. Do not disturb!! It will take 6 to 8 days at a constant optimum temperature of 78 to 83 degrees F. or 9-14 days in the 70's. Temperature range: 68-83 degrees F. If you are not within this range, you will have poor results.
- SCOBY tea should have a sparkling, cidery taste with a pH of 2.7 to 3.2.
- Your "baby" will grow right on top of mom and can be peeled off.
- You can start another batch with mom or with baby.
- Be sure to save 1-2 cups of tea for your starter tea.
- If you disturb your tea while she is fermenting, she will not produce a baby.