Donna Schwenk's Cultured Food Life

Getting Started Guide

Kefir
Are you ready to find out what you’re really made of?

Ten *Trillion* Cells of bacteria.

That is more than cells in the human body! These special helpers are alive and well, and living by the trillions inside of you.

Eat cultured foods that are teaming with these special good bacteria that make your body thrive and shine!

**Where do I start?**

You can always purchase ready made cultured foods if you would like to try them first. There are a few that are available for you to try.

**Kefir:**

*LifeWay Kefir* has many flavors and different types. It is available at most health food stores and many grocery stores. Remember that this kefir only has ten good bacteria’s while homemade has 35-50 good bacteria.
Kombucha:

This is available at most heath foods stores in the refrigerator section. There are several brands but my favorite is **GT’s Synergy Kombucha.** They have many delicious flavors and is something I buy all the time when I am out running around and need a quick pick me up.

Cultured Vegetables:

They can be a little harder to find but many health food stores and grocery stores carry **Bubbies Pickles and Sauerkraut.** These are cultured and have a lot of good bacteria’s. Different than brands made with vinegar, these are the ones you want to purchase. Bubbies are so delicious; they will quickly become some of your favorite pickles and sauerkraut. You can find other cultured veggie brands at health food stores. They will say “Raw and Active Cultures” on the label.
This is the thing I ask the most to people that are just beginning with cultured foods:

**Which cultured food is of most interested to you?**

Which one sparks your interest? It is usually the one you should start with. I believe that things get your attention for a reason. When people start with what interests them the most, they have the most success.

Pick one: Kefir, Kombucha or Cultured Vegetables. They all have wonderful properties and do different things, and are all important.

*Start with one, master it, then move to another one.*

This is what I did and it laid a great foundation. This made it easier to move to new-cultured foods. I was ready and didn’t feel overwhelmed.
If you choose kefir first, you’re in good company because this is where I started. Kefir was the first cultured food I made and mastered. It became my best friend and teacher as I learned all about these special foods.

Kefir has been called the champagne of yogurt, but it is so much more than. Kefir contains 35-50 major strains of friendly bacteria not commonly found in yogurt. Kefir is a turbo-charged-energy-anti-biotic-colonic-cleanser drink.

Yogurt is a mild nutrient rich drink that pre-digests the lactose helping the body better assimilate the good stuff. Kefir is much easier to make than yogurt and only requires a canning jar or vessel. To find out more health benefits about kefir check out my website and videos.

http://www.culturedfoodlife.com/what-is-kefir/
Two Methods For Making Kefir

There are two ways to make kefir. You can use kefir grains that reproduce and will last a lifetime (if you don’t kill them with heat or starve them by not feeding them). The other way is to purchase Kefir Starter Culture packages. You get 6 packages that makes 42 gallons of kefir. I’ll show you this method first, because this is how I first started making kefir.

How to Make Kefir Using Starter Packages

(Kefir for Dummies or the Extremely Busy)

If you are super busy and don’t have time to make kefir everyday, or want something that you can make in large quantities, this is the method for you. I have taught this way to some of my favorite busy people and they love the ease of this method.

The only drawback is having to buy kefir starter culture packages. However each package makes up to seven gallons and the whole box will make up to 42 gallons so it’s very economical. Direct-set style powdered Kefir Starter Culture is a great option for people interested in making their own Kefir, but do not want to maintain a set of Milk Kefir Grains.
First you will need to purchase your packages.

This is a six-package starter, which will make up to 42 gallons of kefir:

http://store.culturedfoodlife.com/product/body-ecology-kefir-starter-culture/

If you don’t want to commit to making that much kefir, you can also purchase a single kefir starter culture packet. It will make two to seven gallons of kefir.

http://store.culturedfoodlife.com/product/milk-kefir-starter-culture/

Ingredients:

- 1 packet of Kefir Starter Culture
- 1 quart Milk
- 1 glass canning jar (quart, or half-gallon)
- 1 lid (plastic is preferable but you can use metal)

**Milk considerations:** Pasteurized milk is most commonly used with this culture. Non-homogenized milk can be used if desired. Ultra-high temperature (UHT) and ultra-pasteurized milk is less likely to culture effectively. Fresh raw milk also can be used but reculturing is less likely to be effective if raw milk is used due to the bacteria content of the raw milk. If you prefer to use raw milk, I strongly recommend using Milk Kefir Grains to make your Kefir.
• Heat the milk to 85-92°F. (this is not necessary but will culture faster if you do.)
• Mix in the starter culture. Be sure to fully incorporate the culture into the liquid.
• Cover the container with a lid and allow the mixture to ferment at 72-80°F (see below):
• Ferment for 18-24 hours

Once the fermentation period is complete, place a lid on the container and store the kefir in the refrigerator.

Choose a safe spot:
An ideal culturing spot should be relatively warm but not excessively so. Temperatures between 72° and 80°F are ideal. The best fermenting spot for Kefir is out of direct sunlight.

Signs the Kefir is Done Culturing:
The culturing process is complete when the milk thickens to the consistency of commercial cultured buttermilk. It will be a pourable liquid, but can be thicker depending on temperature. The milk will also take on a distinctive sour fragrance.
Reculturing the Kefir

Kefir made with a direct-set style starter culture can often be recultured anywhere from 2-7 times. The exact number of successive reculturings will depend on the freshness of the Kefir. I recommend reculturing Kefir within 7 days of making each batch. Longer periods in between batches will decrease the likelihood the new batch will culture successfully. Please note, reculturing is less likely to be effective if raw milk is used due to the bacteria content of the raw milk. If you prefer to use raw milk, I strongly recommend using Milk Kefir Grains to make your Kefir.

- Reserve ¼ cup of Kefir from a previous batch.
- Thoroughly incorporate the ¼ cup of reserved Kefir into a quart of fresh milk.
- Cover the container with a tight lid and allow the mixture to ferment at 72-80°F (see below):
  - Ferment for 18-24 hours
  - Once the fermentation period is complete store in the refrigerator.

If you want to make more than one quart of recultured kefir, just add more kefir from the previous batch and more milk as follows:

For 1/2 gallon, use 1/2 cup of reserved kefir and 1/2 gallon of milk.

For 1 gallon, use 1 cup of reserved kefir and 1 gallon of milk.

Videos on how to make Kefir:
How to Make Kefir Using Milk Kefir Grains

Kefir grains were the second option that I chose after I had made kefir with the kefir powder packages for a while.

The reason I chose to switch to kefir grains was because they would last a lifetime if I took care of them. They would give me an endless supply of kefir and would multiply so I could share them with others. They also have more beneficial bacteria than the powder packages.

The only drawback when making kefir with kefir grains is that you have to care for them just as you would any living thing. Much like a pet, kefir must be fed and cared for. Without food for several days they will start to die. They eat the lactose in the milk, and when it runs out they die. It is also important to make kefir on a regular basis to help the grains multiply and grow. There is no problem if you take a break from kefir as long as you keep them in fresh milk. However they won’t multiply and grow if you don’t make kefir regularly.

I have had my grains for over eleven years and they have reproduced and been given to hundreds if not thousands of people. They will last for generations as long as they are cared for. My kefir grains are family members and I treat them like gold because of all they do for me. If you do the same they will make kefir for you day after day. They will provide more nutrients and probiotics than you can imagine. They do the work and you receive the benefits. This is how it was so wonderfully designed to help all of us.
You have to find or purchase kefir grains. Here are some resources.

My personal live grains from my store:
http://store.culturedfoodlife.com/product/donnas-kefir-grains/

Shared Kefir Grains:
http://www.torontoadvisors.com/Kefir/kefir-list.php

Heal Thyself has a community of people willing to share kefir grains:
http://heal-thyself.ning.com/group/introtoferments

To make 1 to 2 cups of kefir

- 1-2 tablespoons of milk kefir grains.
- Glass jar (3 or 4 cup) with lid or cover with plastic wrap. I use a quart measuring jar.
- Preferably a non-metal strainer and spoon
- A non-metal container with wide mouth for straining and storing the kefir. I like glass containers.
- 1 to 2 cups of fresh milk. (Most types of milk are acceptable, including whole milk, fat-reduced, non-fat, pasteurized and homogenized, and coconut milk. Although I mostly enjoy fresh raw whole cow’s milk to culture kefir)

Place fresh kefir grains in a glass jar and fill the jar with fresh milk (best not to fill jar more than 2/3 – 3/4 full) Be sure the jar isn’t hot out of the dishwasher. Heat will kill your grains!

Place a lid on the jar or use plastic wrap. Let sit at room temperature for approx. 24 hours or until the milk has thickened or has become sour to your liking. (Designate a spot for fermentation away from direct sunlight)
Pour the contents into a strainer (see resources). You can also strain with a slotted spoon. (I use a plastic slotted spoon.) Strain the kefir into a container to separate the grains from the liquid kefir. **What you’ve strained is your kefir ready for consumption.** You can also put it into the fridge for later.

Wash the jar, then place the kefir grains from the strainer back into the washed jar.

**Remember to let your jar cool before adding your grains.**

Then add fresh milk.

The whole process is simply repeated for the next batch.
I hope this guide has given you a really good foundation on Kefir. Once you master everything in here, I invite you to check out my videos.

Not only do I show you different recipes you can make with kefir, but also how to second ferment your kefir. This greatly increases its nutritional value and makes it taste much better!

You can view this video as well as videos on kombucha and cultured vegetables by becoming a “Biotic Pro” member.

Check out the following link for more information: http://www.culturedfoodlife.com/become-a-biotic-pro/

**Resources to help you get started:**

Here’s a link to some products I’ve gathered up on my store to help you get started. They can really help you if you’re just starting out.