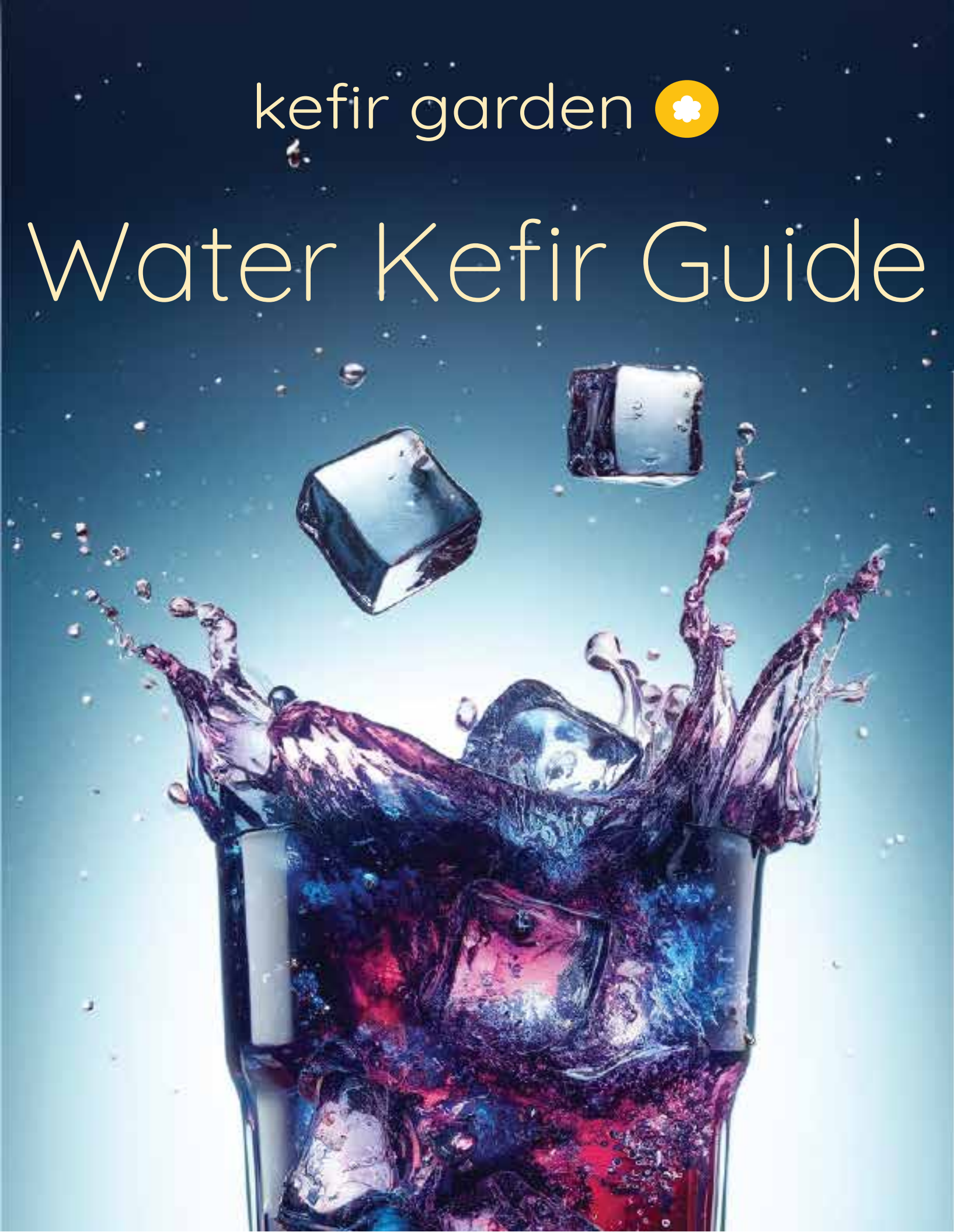
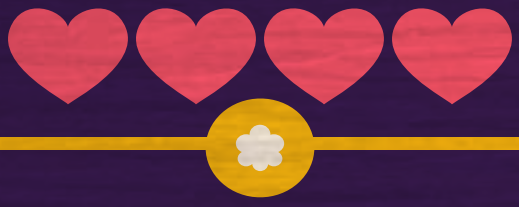
kefir garden

# Water Kefir Guide



# Thank you for choosing Kefir Garden!



## Welcome to the wonderful world of homemade kefir!

Probiotics and potential benefits await!
Making kefir in your own kitchen is not only very cost-effective but also deeply satisfying!

Our comprehensive guide is designed to transform you from a novice to a seasoned kefir connoisseur! 🎩

You can read through the entire guide or jump to any section you would like!

## Let's get started!

# Table of Contents



## Questions?


Please contact us, we would love to hear from you!
Email: evelyn@kefirgarden.com

Contact Form: www.kefirgarden.com/contact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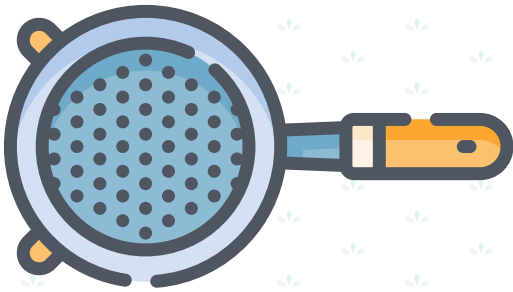
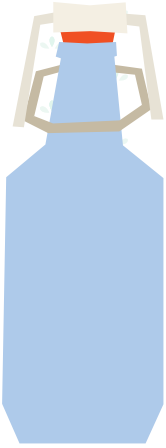
# The tools you'll need:

**Water**
-Spring Water

**Jar**



**Strainer**
Stainless Steel
or Nylon



**Optional:**
Flip Top Bottle

**Water Kefir Grains**

**Cover**
-Cloth or Coffee Filter

**Rubberband or String**

**Cane Sugar**

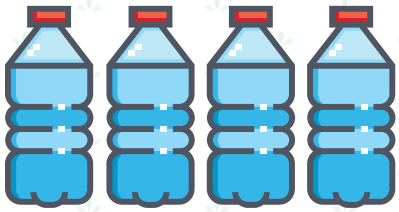
**Wooden or**

**Plastic Spoon**

# Recommendations

On the pages that follow we will go into more detail about Water, Sugar, and Temperature. If you are happy with our recommendations below and don't need an explanation, please skip ahead to your first batch! If you would like to understand our reasoning keep reading.

## Start with Spring Water



## Experiment with other types later!

## Use Brown Sugar (organic if you can)

Depending on the water source, white sugar may not have enough minerals. White sugar can also cause syrupy kefir so it should be avoided. Other types of sugar can overmineralize the grains--or even damage them!

## Temperature is important

*** Ideal ***

25C/78F

2 days

If your temperature is below this range your kefir will ferment slowly and will not be as active. We have options for warming your jar on pages 8-9.

# Water

## Start with Spring Water

Water kefir grains are **very sensitive** to the water you use and prefer as close to natural as possible!

For this reason, we recommend starting with **bottled spring water.** We know it may seem annoying, but it is easier to start with spring and then adapt!

Once your kefir grains have been established and are growing happily, you can use the extra kefir grains to try out your preferred source of water.

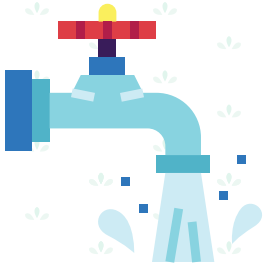
Even with spring water, **avoid using the large reusable jugs (18L or 5 Gallon).** They rinse these large bottles with chemicals and although they should be safe for human use, water kefir grains have difficulty with them. **Avoid Naya Spring water.** It overmineralizes the grains.

In the following pages we will discuss the issues with different water sources: Tap, Filtered, Reverse Osmosis, Distlled, and Well water.

**If you don't need a detailed explanation of why kefir grains suffer, you can skip these pages and head to sugar!** ☺

# Tap Water?

## Chlorine?



## Chloramine?

Different cities and towns handle their water treatment differently. The chemicals vary and in some areas there is heavy use of chlorine.

While you may be able to boil out the chlorine, chlorine and chloramine can interact with other chemicals in the water and create issues with the grains.

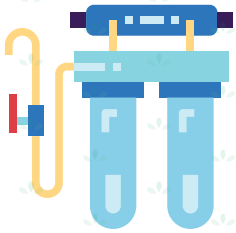
**Chloramine** is commonly used as an alternative to chlorine and cannot be boiled out quickly. You typically have to treat the water differently in order to remove it.

Both chlorine and chloramine can be removed with asorbic acid (vitamin C), potassium metabisulfite, and others.

That being said, there are also times when towns do a chlorine burn through the system and increase the levels of chlorine in order to kill bacteria growing microbial colonies throughout the pipelines.

Because of the variation between towns, the creation of other chemicals that harm kefir grains, and possible issues with removing chlorine/chloramine from water, it is best to start with spring water and test after you have extra kefir grains. **Many customers can use their tap water without issues. It is better to play it safe to start and then experiment.**

# Filtered/RO/Distilled/Well?

Filtered water typically uses carbon filters and this has caused problems with several customers.
Pitcher systems like **Brita** and **Berkey** have caused kefir grains to stop fermenting or become very weak and dis-intigrate. However, sometimes these filters don't bother the grains for some customers.

Reverse osmosis and distilled water both remove minerals from the water and finish with carbon filters as well. Some customers have had success, while others do not. Well water also uses filters and can cause damage to the grains.

Once again, it is better to make sure your kefir grains ferment properly then you can test your extra grains with your normal water. If things work well with your extra grains, you can continue indefinitely with no worries!

# Sugar

**We recommend regular brown or cane sugar when starting out**.

Avoid Rapadura and Sucanat because the higher mineral content may damage the grains. Avoid white sugar and the **Redpath brand** because some customers have issues with these.

**After your water kefir grains are fermenting and happy, you can attempt to use other sugar types such as coconut and palm**. Honey is generally avoided because of its natural antimicrobrial properties, but you are free to experiment once you have extra kefir grains! To not overwhelm your kefir grains when experimenting, try mixing the new sugar with some brown sugar.

**Palm?**
**Coconut?**
**Honey?**
**Try them all!**

# Ratio and Temperature

## How much kefir grains, sugar, and water?

Fresh Water Kefir Grains:

**1/4 cup of grains**
**1/4 cup of sugar**
**3 1/2 cups of water**

Dehydrated Grains:

**1/3 cup of grains**
**1/3 cup of sugar**
**3 cups of water**

Our dehydrated grains should rehydrate quickly. After the first batch, you can use the 1:1 ratio of grains to sugar. 🙂

## Temperature and Fermentation Rate

Too chilly temperatures affect the way the bacteria behave. **You may not see any activity if your temperature is below 25C/78F!**

The next page is about warming options.

**Chilly**

23C/73F

❄ ❄ ❄

3 days+

*** Ideal ***

25C/78F

🤩

2 days

**Warm**

28C/82F

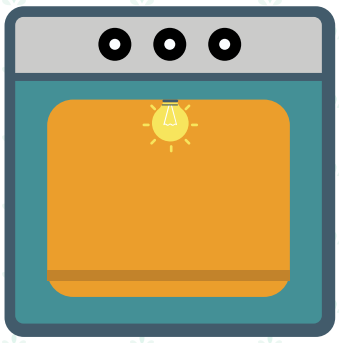
🔥

1 day or less

# Warming Options

If your home is chilly, here are some options to warm your ferments. **Always ensure your warming source is not too hot by testing with a thermometer or your hand.**

## Oven Method



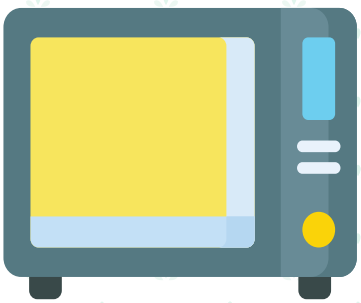
Start a fresh batch of water kefir by placing the fermenting jar in the oven with just the light on.

For most homes, the oven light provides enough heat. However, some ovens can get too hot and cook the kefir grains.

To test, turn on the oven light for half an hour and check the temperature with a thermometer or your hand. It should be around 25-30°C (78-86°F). Higher temperatures can cause the grains to disintegrate.

If your oven is slightly too warm, prop the door open with a towel to lower the temperature.

## Microwave Light



Some customers use the microwave light to increase the temperature, keeping the door ajar to keep the light on. This raises the temperature to a suitable range. As with the oven method, wait and check how hot the microwave gets with just the light on. **Of course, don't turn on the microwave!**

# Warming Continued

## Trusty Lamp (like a salt lamp)

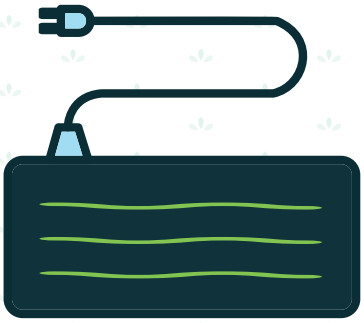
Some customers use small lamps to raise the temperature near the jar to a suitable range. If you have a salt lamp, usually you can adjust the brightness to control the temperature.

## Baker's Method

This is from one of our customer's solutions. It has worked for others as well:

"I thought of it, as I'm a bread baker and when I need my bread to rise quickly, this is what I do. I just placed my jar in my oven and put a Pyrex bowl beside it. I poured boiling water into the bowl and closed my oven. I had originally thought I'd perhaps change the water, but I didn't need to. The heat and humidity from that original bowl of boiling water did the trick!"

## Seeding Mats or Kombucha Warmers

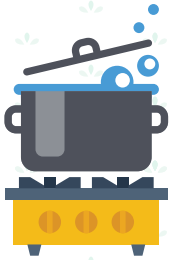


Many customers use seeding mats or warmers to successfully bring the temperature up to a suitable range.

# Your First Batch!

## Step 1: Dissolve Sugar

**Dissolve your sugar into the appropriate amount of water.**
**You can do this in several ways:**



Heat a cup of the water on the stove and add the sugar. Stir gently until it is dissolved. Add the mixture to your jar. Then add the rest of the water to rapidly bring down the temperature. Test the temperature with a thermometer or a clean pinky!

Some customers use a whisk and quickly stir the sugar and water together until fully dissolved. It is surprisingly quick.

Others use a blender and quickly blend the sugar and water together for about a minute until fully dissolved.

As a last resort or if you don't want to take out any equipment, shaking the jar vigourously with a tightened lid works. It may take a couple of minutes but it works. We are ashamed to say we have done this a few times, haha!

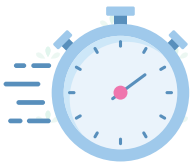
# Your First Batch Continued

## Step 2: Ferment!

1. **Use an appropriately sized jar** for the amount of water that you are using.

2. After your sugary water has been cooled and is room temperature, you can **pour your water** into a jar.

3. **Cover your jar** with  a coffee filter or cloth to prevent fruit flies from sampling your kefir!



4. **Let it sit** for 48 hours at your desired location. Keep away from direct heat sources that can damage the grains, such as a stove.

5. When time is up, **gently strain the kefir** through a strainer to reserve the kefir grains for future batches.

# How do I know my kefir is done?

## You will know your water kefir is done when:

- You see bubbling in the jar
- Some kefir grains may be floating
- The water has turned opaque
- The taste is pleasantly tart*** 😋

**Start** **Finish**

*** **Important**

Water kefir grains prefer to be fermented regularly! If they have been resting, like with shipping or when you take a break, they may be sluggish to fully remove the sugar from the water. It may take a couple of batches for them to get back to full strength and increased tartness.

# Ready for flavouring

You're about to enjoy the refreshing taste of your very own homemade water kefir, and many customers find it to be a delightful experience!

The light, natural sweetness and gentle fizz make plain water kefir a satisfying and healthy alternative to sugary drinks. It's also rich in probiotics, which can help support digestive health.  It's low in calories and completely natural, making it an ideal choice for a balanced lifestyle. We are excited for you to try this delicious, nourishing drink that you've crafted yourself!

**Well done!**

**Finished Water Kefir**

**Restart the process!**


Now the fun begins!

# Enjoyment Methods!

We will first go over some options
and then go into detail about creating them.

## Pure Water Kefir

low alcohol: .5%

Drinking plain water kefir is a great way to boost your gut health with natural probiotics and improve digestion.

Plus, it's a tasty, low-calorie alternative to sugary sodas, helping you stay hydrated and feel great.

## Flavored, no fermentation

low alcohol: .5%

Flavored water kefir without fermentation is a great choice for kids and those avoiding alcohol. It is a fun and tasty drink with minimal alcohol content.

It's the perfect way to have an enjoyable, healthy beverage!

## Second Fermentation

low alcohol: .5% - 2% ABV

This is the most popular way to drink water kefir. It offers a delightful taste while providing probiotics that can support gut health and digestion.

**The amount of alcohol varies based on the ingredients for second fermentation. If you are using a lot of sugar or very sweet fruit, or fruit naturally high in fructose, the alcohol content may be higher.**

# Flavouring Ideas!

## Fruits


Raisins


Apricot


Apple


Strawberry


Blueberry


Lemon


Mango


Pineapple


Cherry


Cranberry

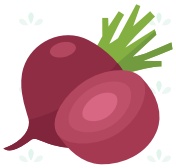

Coconut


Kiwi

## Veggies


Cucumber


Carrot

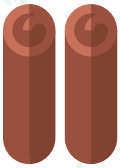

Beets


Tomato


Celery

## Spices


Ginger


Cinnamon


Vanilla


Clove


Nutmeg


Cardamom

# Flavouring Ideas Continued

## Herbs


Mint


Basil


Thyme


Rosemary


Lavendar

## Tea Types


Green Teas

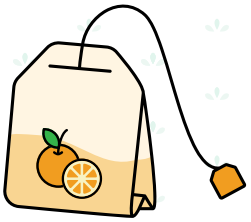

Black Teas


WhiteTeas


Oolong Teas


Spiced Teas


Berry Blend Teas

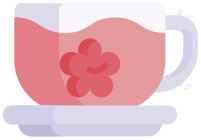

Citrus Teas

## Herbal Teas


Chamomile


Peppermint


Rooibos


Hibiscus


Lemon Balm

# Optional Fruit Syrup Recipe

## Ingredients

1 cup fresh or frozen fruit (e.g., berries, peaches, mangoes)
1 cup sugar (adjust to taste)
1/2 cup water
Optional: 1-2 tablespoons lemon juice (for added brightness)

### Instructions

**Prepare the Fruit**: Wash and chop the fruit into small pieces. If using berries, they can be left whole.

**Cook the Syrup**: In a medium saucepan, combine the fruit, sugar, and water. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar.

**Simmer and Thicken**: Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and let the mixture simmer for 10-15 minutes, or until the fruit has broken down and the syrup has thickened slightly.

**Strain the Syrup**: Remove the saucepan from the heat and let it cool slightly. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a clean jar or bottle, pressing down on the solids to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard the solids.

**Store the Syrup**: Allow the syrup to cool completely, then cover and store it in the refrigerator. It should keep for up to 2 weeks.

**Optional**: For extra flavor, you can add spices (such as cinnamon, cloves, or vanilla) to the syrup while it's simmering. Simply strain them out along with the fruit solids.

## Ideas for Syrups

**Berry Syrup**: Use a mix of your favourite berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries). For a deeper flavor, add a splash of vanilla extract after straining.

**Citrus Syrup**: Use oranges, lemons, or a mix of citrus fruits. Add a bit of the zest for an extra punch of flavour.

**Stone Fruit Syrup**: Use peaches, plums, or apricots. A pinch of nutmeg or a cinnamon stick can complement the fruit's natural sweetness.

**Tropical Syrup**: Use pineapple, mango, or passionfruit. Adding a bit of fresh ginger during the simmering process can enhance the tropical flavours.

# Flavoured, no Fermentation

Plain water kefir is a refreshing, naturally effervescent drink that's perfect on its own, but it also offers endless possibilities for customization.

Enhance it with slices of citrus, berries, herbs, or even spices and vegetables for a fresh twist. You can also add a maceration of fruits, veggies, and spices with sugar to elevate its natural taste. For more sweetness, try adding natural fruit juices or syrups, or steep teas like green, hibiscus, or chamomile for a calming blend.

Whether pure or with creative additions, water kefir is a versatile and delicious way to nourish your body.

## Using Fresh Flavours

Chop your chosen fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, or spices—such as berries, citrus slices, diced stone fruits, cucumber slices, mint, or ginger—into small pieces. Add them directly to your freshly strained water kefir and gently stir. You can either strain the mixture and drink it immediately, or refrigerate it for a few hours to let the flavours infuse before enjoying.

## Create a Maceration

Mix your chopped or sliced fruits, vegetables, herbs, or spices with a small amount of sugar and let them sit for 30 minutes. The sugar will help extract the natural juices and intensify the flavors. After the juices have been released, give the mixture a good stir before adding it to your freshly strained water kefir. You can enjoy it right away or refrigerate for an hour to allow the flavours to meld before mixing again, straining, and sipping.

## Using Juices

Add 1/4 to 1/2 cup of fresh fruit juice (such as orange, apple, or grape) directly to your freshly strained water kefir and stir well. You can drink it immediately, or refrigerate to enjoy it chilled.

## Using Syrups

Stir 2-4 tablespoons of prepared or store-bought fruit syrup into your freshly strained water kefir, adjusting to taste. You can drink it immediately or refrigerate to enjoy it cold.

# Second Fermentation

A second fermentation is when you take your finished kefir (without your water kefir grains) and add fruits and different juice combinations. This allows you to make a probiotic soda that is bubbly, slightly tart, and tasty!

**You do not need a swing top bottle. You can do a second fermenation using a jar with a cloth lid.** If you would like carbonation, you will need a swing top bottle to contain the considerable pressure build-up from the carbon dioxide being relased by the bacteria fermenting the sugars.

**Be careful when opening your swing-top bottle! Do not point the top toward yourself or others, as the carbonation could cause an eruption. To reduce this risk, refrigerate your bottle for at least an hour to decrease the pressure. If you're concerned about excessive carbonation, you can 'burp' the bottle every 12 hours.**

**Please refer to pages 15-18 for flavouring options.**

## How to create a Second Fermentation

Place your chosen flavourings inside the swing top bottle. Close the lid and let it sit at room temperature for another day or two. Taste to see if how it progresses. Enjoy when the flavours are perfect! Once you are happy, stop the fermentation by placing it in the fridge to chill.

**Helpful tips:**

- When adding fresh fruit, add at least 1/2 cup to get enough flavour. Remember that the bacteria need sugar to keep fermenting, so if your chosen fruit/herbs/spices are low in sugar, **you must add sugar so that you will have activity.** This will take experimentation, but start with 1 tablespoon if it is a low-sugar fruit.

- For fruit juices, add at least 1/4 cup.

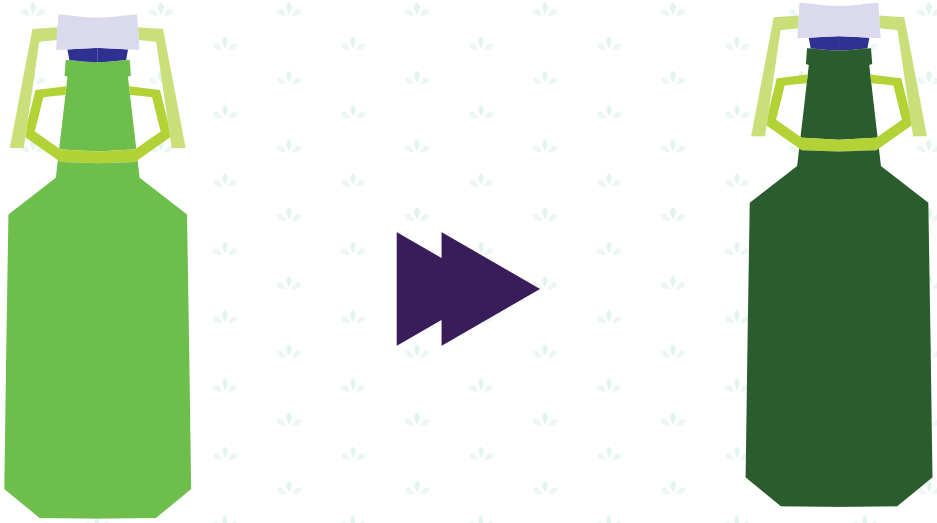
- For extracts, try using 1/2 tablespoon per litre/quart

# Finished Kefir Storage

Finished water kefir becomes more acidic over time as the live bacteria continue to consume available sugars to survive.

Eventually, your water kefir may turn into vinegar! While some people may desire this outcome to create sweet vinegars, others may find the acidity too strong.

For the best flavour, try to drink your kefir within 3 days.



**Finished Water Kefir** **Water Kefir Vinegar**

**We recommend consuming your water kefir within 3 days to avoid too much acidity.**

# Kefir Grain Storage

## Storing water kefir grains is very simple!

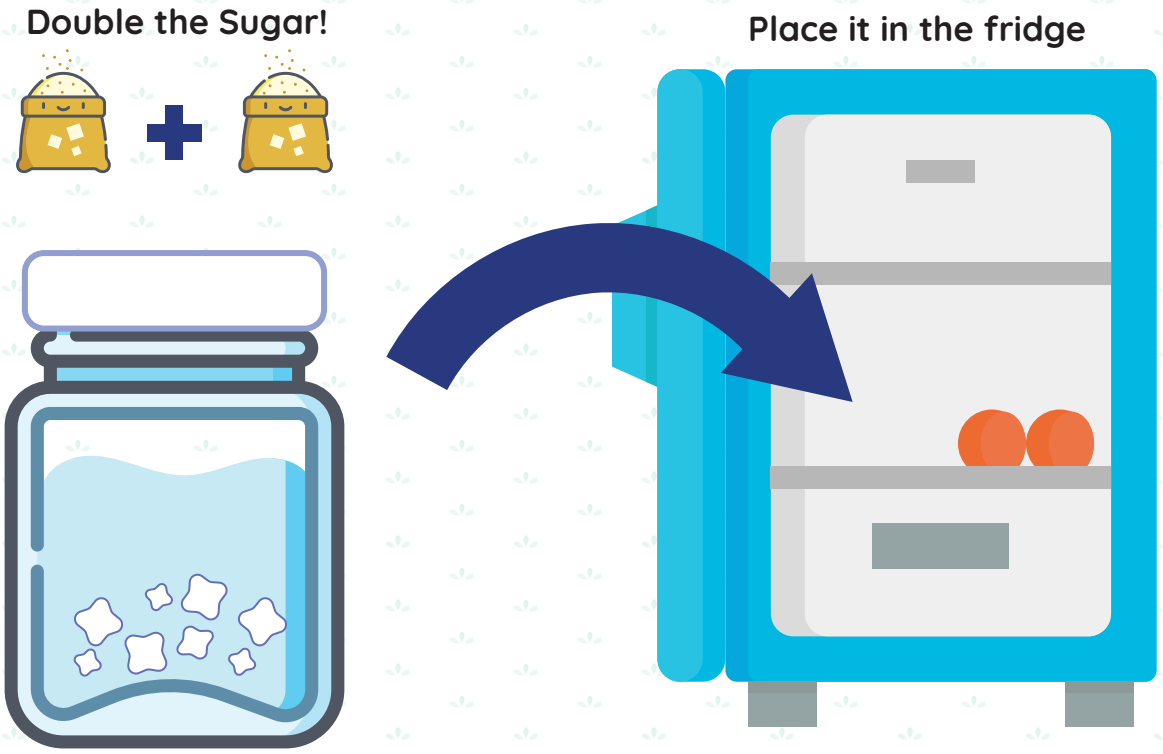
To store for 1-2 weeks, double the amount of sugar in your sweetened water and place your jar in the fridge.

For 3 weeks plus, add triple the amount of sugar.

You should change the water at least once a month.

**Freezing kefir grains should be avoided as it can damage them.**

Water kefir grains are sluggish after resting and may take a few batches to get back to full strength!




**Triple the sugar for 3 weeks+, and change the sweetened water once a month!**

# FAQs

## Do I need to use a Flip Top bottle?

**No you do not!** However, we advise against trying to achieve a lot of fizz when using a closed mason jar for the second fermentation. The pressure buildup can be significant, potentially causing your jar to explode. Two alternative options are using an airlock lid or a cloth cover for your jar. Both methods will allow for a second fermentation, but the carbonation will be reduced.

## Do I need to do a second fermentation?

**No you don't!** It is perfectly fine to drink pure water kefir, or flavour it immediately for drinking.

## What is the sediment at the bottom of my ferment?

Most likely, it's yeast. During the second fermentation, the beneficial bacteria and yeast consume the sugars and multiply. The yeast then settle at the bottom of the jar and can be seen. You can pour off the water kefir above the yeast and discard the deposit.

**However, if you are seeing yeast forming during the first fermentation** with your kefir grains, you can soak the grains in fresh water for about 30 minutes. Discard the water afterward and retain the grains. This helps to rebalance them.

## How to decrease or increase fizz?

Temperature and sugar content affect how much fizz is created. **If you use fruits or flavourings that are low in sugar, you wil not get as much carbonation.** Likewise, if your temperature is chilly, the bacteria will not be as active and will decrease the carbonation.

Having sufficient sugar and the right temperature are essential for creating a strong second fermentation.

## Cross Contamination?

Water kefir grains are suceptible to cross contamination because it is an open air ferment. They can be contaminated with the natural yeast in the environment as well as other ferments in the vicinity. It is best to keep them away from other ferments until they are fermenting properly. Once their bacterial populations are back in balance and producing kefir, the likelihood of them being contaminated descreases.

# Congratulations!!!

## You are now a water kefir making pro!

Questions?  Comments? Saying Hello!

**Contact us at:**

**kefirgarden.com/contact**

We hope this guide was helpful!

Our customers are our greatest inspiration! Hearing from you keeps us going, growing, and learning!  We want to be better for you. If you have any questions at all, please dont hesitate to contact us.

Also, if you have any ideas or experiments you want to share, we would love to hear about it!  Our customers have also taught us so much and we love to share the knowledge through our guides.

We wish you all the best on your journey to better health!

**Happy Kefir Making!**