

Basic Water Kefir Recipe:

- 3 Tablespoons water kefir grains
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 1.5 Cups water
- ½ lemon (if you can't find an organic lemon, then take the skin off first)
- A dried fig, or a tablespoon of sultanas or raisins

(Optional: add 2-4 teaspoons of fresh ginger root juice to make a refreshing ginger beer kefir. To make the ginger root juice, pound or chop finely about 60g fresh ginger root and blend it to a mash with half a cup of water. Strain through a cloth, squeezing out the juice. You can also use dried ginger powder. Boil 1-2 tablespoons of ginger powder with 1 cup of water and then strain through a fine cloth. Cool this liquid before adding it to your brew.)

I make this quantity of kefir (or a double batch if I have more grains) in a 1 quart (1 litre) glass preserving jar. Whatever jar you use, please make sure you leave an inch or so at the top to accommodate the carbon dioxide gas produced by the fermentation process and avoid explosions! As your kefir grains reproduce themselves, you will need to adjust the ratios of ingredients for a bigger batch, or make more batches.

Method:

*Strain and rinse the grains under clean running water.

*Put them in the jar with the other ingredients, and stir until the sugar dissolves.

*Close the jar with a good firm lid, and leave it at room temperature to ferment. Stir after 24 hours, and as often as you like.

*Brew until the raisins float to the surface and the liquid is a bit fizzy. This might take about 48 hours, but might be a good deal faster when the weather is warm.

*Scoop the lemons and raisins off the top of the liquid.

*Now use a strainer to separate the water kefir grains from the liquid. Rinse the kefir grains thoroughly under cold water.

*Squeeze the lemon into the liquid and put it into sealed bottles or jars. You can chill and drink the beverage now, if you wish. Or you can leave it to ferment (secondary fermentation) for another day or so at room temperature, before moving it to the fridge to chill for drinking. (Further fermentation will increase the alcohol content of the drink, depending on the amount of sugar in the liquid. In any case, water kefir drinks seem to be only very mildly alcoholic – like home-made ginger beer.)

Other Tips:

*Once you have made your first batch of water kefir, you can rinse the grains and start the next batch immediately.

*If you don't want to make another batch immediately, you can store the grains in the fridge in a sugar water solution (1 Tablespoon of sugar to 1 Cup water) for up to 7 days. You can also freeze strained, rinsed water kefir grains in plastic ziploc bags for up to 2-3 months.

*Sugar: Apparently the grains do best on less-refined, more mineral-rich sugars, though any kind of cane sugar will do (refined white sugar, golden sugar, muscovado, rapadura).

*Water: The grains do best in hard, highly mineralised water. If you are using soft or distilled water, add ¼ teaspoon of baking soda per 6 cups of water to keep the grains healthy.

*Fermentation time: One of the main reasons why water kefir grains become sick and stop propagating is over-fermentation. In general, they should be brewed no longer than 2 days, though they may need 3 days in colder

conditions. During the summer, daily brews might be needed to prevent over-fermentation. A brew is ready for straining when the raisins are floating to the top, and the liquid has become slightly fizzy and a little sour.

*Most of the information I've seen says to keep the kefir in glass containers, so please move it out of the plastic shipping container as soon as you can, even if you are not planning to use it immediately.

*Always keep a batch of water kefir grains brewing with the basic recipe (or the ginger beer recipe) above. Please use only your extra grains for other recipes, since some ingredients may cause the grains to lose their vigour and stop growing.

*Use spare water kefir grains to make experimental brews using honey, herbs, or fruit juices. You can also try adding these other ingredients to the brew for the secondary fermentation.

*For more information and recipes, try going to Dom's kefir site, at <http://users.chariot.net.au/~dna/Makekefir.html#Kefir-d-acqua>

Enjoy! Rebecca

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Extra comments:

- My experience seems to be that the grains seem to prefer the more refined sugar, so I store them in white sugar, and use a combination of white and unrefined for making the kefir
- I use the ginger a bit differently. I like to add sliced ginger to the initial brew to get a more pronounced ginger flavour. And / or I add finely chopped ginger to the bottles, which doesn't give as gingery a flavour, but makes it very fizzy
- If you have a very fizzy batch, be sure and open it over the sink. And have your drinking glass in the sink and ready. It can be very explosive opening the bottle.
- It is important to use bottles that are designed for carbonated drinks. Before we got the right kind of bottles, we had many a bottle of kefir or kombucha explode, even in the fridge.
- Your grains should always be either:
 - a. Brewing, or
 - b. Stored in sugar water in the fridge, in a jar with a loosened lid
- If grains are left at room temperature once they have brewed, they will continue to ferment and produce gas, and we have witnessed very nasty, dangerous explosions take place. If you follow these instructions, there is no cause for concern, but be aware that a lot of gas can be produced and take care.
- I have made very nice apple cider using apple juice diluted by about a 1/3 with water
- Use non-chlorinated water, as chlorine will kill the good "bugs"

Deb

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