

homemade kefir

Once you receive your package, either feed your kefir grains right away or place them in the refrigerator until you are ready to feed them. Next, follow the steps below to “refresh” the grains after their journey from my home to yours and help them successfully adjust to their new environment:

1. Position a plastic strainer with medium sized holes over a mixing bowl and empty the contents of your baggie into the strainer. *Note: If you use a strainer with holes that are too small, it will take you forever to strain your kefir so do yourself a huge service and invest in a strainer with medium holes right from the start. Many colanders have the appropriate size holes. Look for something around 1/8”.*
2. Rock the strainer from side to side several times to help all of the kefir drain into the bowl below. Since the grains have traveled for a few days, discard their traveling liquid as it will be quite sour.
3. Dump the strained grains into a clean jar and cover them with a cup of fresh milk from the fridge.
4. Loosely cover the jar with something breathable, such as a cheesecloth. *Note: The “cover” is simply to keep out dust and bugs – the kefir will need to breathe well so do not seal.*
5. Place the jar out of direct sunlight and leave it at room temperature for 12-24 hours. Remove the cover and give the contents a swirl. If you notice a change in texture (thickening or lumpiness), the kefir is ready to strain. If the texture is still like regular milk, replace the cover and return in 12-24 hours. Examine texture again. The grains may need to sit in fresh milk for up to 72 hours (3 days) the first time. After 3 days, if you still notice no texture change, repeat steps 1-5 again with fresh milk.
6. Once you observe the change in texture, your kefir is ready to drink! Strain your grains out of the kefir and cover them with fresh milk for your next batch (steps 3-4) and keep the strained kefir for drinking. Moving forward, the grains should be adjusted to their new milk type, house temperature, etc. and they should follow the normal kefir culturing rule of thumb: 1 teaspoon grains + 1 cup of milk + 1 day.

Once prepared, kefir can be stored in the fridge for weeks at a time. Fermentation will continue in the fridge, though at a much slower rate. Because of this, the sourness of the kefir will grow as the days/weeks go by and more and more whey (clear liquid) will develop in your jar.

To take a break from daily kefir making, simply place strained grains into a clean jar, cover with plenty of fresh milk, cover with a lid, and store in the refrigerator. You will want to strain and cover with fresh milk periodically to make sure the grains don't starve. You'll know it's time for fresh milk when around 1/3 of the jar is whey (every few weeks).

It's not necessary to wash the culturing jar between fill-ups (unless that is your personal preference). If you do wash it, make sure you rinse it thoroughly because the chemicals in soap can kill the grains.

You can use any type of milk for kefir making. If you do change milk types, the culturing will need time to level out—you will notice more or less whey at first, so revert back to the step 5 above during the transition period (up to 3 batches). You will not need to discard any of the kefir during this time, it is all good for consumption. If you switch to non-dairy milk, you will need to “reset” the grains in dairy milk once every 5 batches to replenish the grains and keep them going strong.

Your grains will grow and you'll know it's time to weed some out when the kefir begins to culture in less than a day. You'll soon get a feel for the optimal texture (somewhat thicker than milk, usually a curd-like texture). Make adjustments to achieve the taste and texture you like! You can feed extra grains to pets, blend them into kefir smoothies, add them to your compost pile, or share them with friends and family.

If you are struggling with knowing when your kefir is ready to strain, here are two helpful videos:

- youtu.be/HOUvcChynyl
- youtu.be/P4kLBhGthUw

Here's to your health!

Lisa Savitski

OurNourishingHome.com