

Milk Kefir

A wonderful probiotic drink that has the consistency of drinking yoghurt. Drink it as it is or add pureed fruit/cocoa powder to make smoothies; freeze to make ice-lollies; strain to make kefir cheese; pour on cereals.

Caring for Milk Kefir:

1) On receiving your grains, carefully open the pouch. They will be in some milk which has been feeding them during their journey. The act of fermentation prevents spoilage.

Using a plastic spoon, pop the grains into a clean jar (a washed jam jar will be fine). The grains do not like being in contact with metal.

Throw the travelling milk away.

Fill the jar quarter full with fresh, full cream milk, preferably organic, unhomogenised as then you will get the most nutrients from your drink, but it will still work if you can't use organic, unhomogenised milk.

2) Find a place for your kefir to live. Kefir grains are alive. They need the right conditions: somewhere warm, but not in direct sunlight or near a direct heat source. On a shelf would be ideal. Too cold and they will take longer to ferment the milk, too hot and they will be killed!

3) Leave your grains to work!

Try and make a routine time for checking your grains. For the first two days, while the grains are settling into their new home, tip the milk away, pour on fresh and put back to ferment. The milk might not have properly fermented as the grains are still settling down.

There is no need to wash the grains – the fermenting process protects them. Just scoop them out (remember that plastic spoon, pop into a clean jar and top up with fresh milk and back on the shelf – it's simple!)

4) On the third day, take the grains out as usual and put them into a clean jar - as above, but then keep the jar of fermented milk. It could be thick and lumpy, or it could be thin and watery. This will depend on the heat and how well it has fermented. Both are ok. Taste it. It should be sour like yoghurt.

Only start with a teaspoonful each as this is strong stuff. Too much too soon and you might find yourself running to the bathroom!

5) Each day at approximately the same time, see to your grains as described. They are forgiving! Don't panic if you forget one day. You may find that the milk has separated into curds and whey, but a quick stir will mix it up again. But don't leave it too long as basically it eats the sugar (lactose) in the milk and once it has eaten it all, it needs a fresh supply of sugar to keep it alive.

The grains will grow. You can increase the amount of milk as you see the consistency changing.

Troubleshooting:

Thin and watery – too cold, leave it for longer to ferment.

Thick and lumpy – it has fermented quickly – that's ok, but might need to add more milk.

Grains growing too fast – either add more milk, or remove some of the grain and throw it away. Use a plastic spoon to slice a chunk off. The grains are pretty indestructible!

Smells bad - fermenting not working, the milk has gone off. Throw grains away. Smell is your checker – if you are worried about it, smell it. If it smells ok, it's ok.

Kefir grains change with the temperature and with a change in 'home'.

The taste will be more or less sour depending on how long they have fermented for. Find out how you like it. You can change the milk every 8 hours if you wish. I find 24 hrs just fine for me.

The only thing you can do wrong is to forget it and for it to get too hungry.

You will get used to your new 'friend'! It will become part of the family.

Some have even given their grains a name!