

Kefir

Kefir is easy to make and one of the best probiotics you can get.

Kefir is a food that has existed since recorded history. It is also a very effective probiotic, improving gut ecology when consumed regularly. It is widely consumed in Russia, much of Eastern Europe, Turkey and the countries of the Caucasus Mountains. The people in these places have used it to the benefit of their health. Kefir is used to preserve milk, which it turns into a mild yogurt type substance when inoculated with Kefir grains. Research has shown that milk soured by natural Kefir grains promotes health and assists in recovery from many disease processes.

Traditional Cultures got their probiotics from lactofermentation of foods. This process is used in the making of pickles and sauerkraut, the preparation of sourdough for bread and the making of yogurt, kefir, vinegar, beer, wine and old fashioned home made ginger beer. Modern foods contain a much lesser amount of these natural probiotics and many people consume none of these types of food. Our food supply is now so sanitised that our health is suffering. Many foods traditionally made through lacto fermentation are pasteurised so that all probiotic organisms are killed. While one can obtain commercial probiotics in pill, capsule and powder form it may not be a substitute for the regular, daily consumption of probiotic foods.

Kefir grains look like a waxy cauliflower substance. It proliferates abundantly when given the right environmental conditions. Kefir is a group of organisms, mostly varieties of lactobacillus and several yeasts, that have evolved to live together in a structure of their own making. Kefir traditionally is used to culture milk which it makes more digestible by consuming the lactose and to some extent breaking down casein and other proteins in some cases making the milk easier for people to digest. The organisms in Kefir stop the proliferation of unhealthy organisms in milk, preserving the milk from spoiling. The organisms that grow in Kefir are friendly to the human gut ecosystem and highly competitive with organisms that proliferate in unhealthy intestines.

On one visit to Russia I stayed in a small village outside Moscow. Each morning the grandmother of the family would wake before dawn and pick vegetables from her garden for the morning salad. We would breakfast on this sour dough black bread, cheese, and fish or cold meat washed down with a glass of Kefir. On returning to Australia I tried to find Kefir and in my search discovered Doms Kefir site www.users.chariot.net.au which gives a vast amount of information on Kefir and from which Kefir grains can be ordered. I also discovered Kefir available from www.rejoiceinlife.com. My own current strain, from which I have grown several bucketfuls of Kefir grains, and passed on to several hundred people, comes from the son of a woman in the Russian village in which I stayed. It began about the size of a 5 cent coin. People in Sydney can get Kefir from my clinic- the Osteopathic and Natural Health Resource Clinic- in Avalon. Phone- 02-99183460.

Following are the instructions we hand out to new owners of Kefir. Check Doms Kefir site for more detailed instructions.

Kefir Notes for New Users

MAKING KEFIR

Put Kefir grains into a clean glass jar. Add milk and gently stir with a soft edged spoon, so as not to break up the Kefir grains. Cover the glass jar with muslin, a clean tea towel or cheese cloth.

NOTE: 1 Cup of milk per 2 heaped tablespoons of Kefir

You can use full cream milk , low fat milk or goats milk. If you have a milk intolerance then use soy milk, rice milk or fruit juice.

Store the culture out of direct sunlight on a bench, for about 24 hours, giving it a gentle stir or shake up to two or three times during that period.

Once the Kefir has cultured to your liking, strain it through a sieve using a spoon to gently separate the curd from the grains. Pour the curd back into a container and refrigerate.

Rinse the jar and put the Kefir grains back into the clean jar with fresh milk and repeat the process.

RESTING KEFIR

If you need a rest from consuming cultured milk, then the Kefir grains should survive a few months in the refrigerator. Store excess Kefir grains in a small amount of milk in a jar in the fridge. Kefir grains may also be stored with success in filtered water but be aware that chlorine and other chemicals may kill the culture. You can culture Kefir on alternate days and leave the Kefir and the grains in a refrigerator in between times.

EXCESS GRAINS

The Kefir grains should double in quantity every week. Kefir grains are edible and according to some sources have documented anticancer properties. Blend them into a banana smoothie, add them to a raw cheesecake, eat them as they are or share them with a friend.

FREEZING KEFIR

To freeze, wash and pat dry the grains. Cover with milk powder and freeze for up to 6 months. To regenerate cover with milk, change milk every 24 hours for 3 days. Discard the curd each time. After 3 days the kefir will be ready for you to use again.

WASHING THE GRAINS

Gently wash the Kefir grains under cold running water (in the sieve) every few weeks.