



# The 30 Day Kefir Challenge

30 Days to a Healthier &  
Happier You!

**Dani Meyer**



*\*Please be sure to consult with your doctor before experimenting with kefir if you have any concerns, especially if you have severe reactions to dairy, are on special diets or are using any medications.\**

# Introduction to Kefir

The #1 thing I recommend to people when I introduce them to the world of fermentation and healthy eating is that they learn how to make kefir at home. It is so easy to do that even folks who have super busy lives can easily fit it into their schedule!

Kefir is a probiotic rich cultured dairy product that is slightly thinner and more tangy than most yogurt. It is considered by many to be a super food and for some people helps in regulating digestion, boosting the immune system, alleviating symptoms of allergies, yeast infections (thrush), constipation, irritable bowel syndrome and many other ailments.

It is made by placing reusable kefir "grains" (a mother culture) in milk and allowing it to culture for 24-48 hours before straining. We drink it plain like a yogurt drink or use it as the base for our green smoothies.

*Fun fact: Kefir grains cannot be manufactured or created from scratch. They must be shared from person to person!*

I have gifted dozens of batches of kefir grains to friends and family over the last few years and have answered a lot of emails and text messages about their new "kefir babies". I hope you will find this guide useful and that you will join us in making your own kefir at home!

## History

The word *kefir* is said to have originated from the Turkish word "Keif" which means "good feeling".

There are many myths and legends about the origins of kefir. Since no one has ever been able to successfully spontaneously create a new batch of kefir grains, it is reasonable to believe that all the current kefir grains in the world stem from one or possibly a handful of original cultures.

The general agreement is that they originated from somewhere in the Caucasus mountains and were originally cultivated by shepherds there. The Caucasus mountain range runs between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, largely following Russia's southernmost border. It is considered part of the natural boundary between Europe and Asia.

One strain of story seems to believe that the grains came about after milk was exposed to some kind of sheep intestinal flora...which could have come about by someone using a sheep stomach as a bag for holding milk. This seems to make sense from the idea that the grains originated from sheep herders. However attempts to recreate this scenario and many many others have never produced kefir grains.

According to another story, Prophet Mohammed received the grains from Allah and gave kefir



grains to his followers and showed them how to make the drink. But the Prophet warned that the drink would lose its healing properties if the grains and recipe were given away.

That is why the so called "grains of the Prophet" were guarded so jealously, considered part of a family's wealth and passed on from generation to generation. For many centuries foreign travelers could only try and enjoy the drink in the Caucasus. Even the Italian trader and explorer, Marco Polo, mentioned kefir in his travel chronicles.

Some people believe that kefir is the "manna" of the Bible to feed the Israelites (which in my opinion makes no sense because manna was a clearly described as a hard product that could be ground and baked into bread).

Regardless of its true origin the best documented story of how it came to be a common food in modern times began in very early 1900's. Word of this health drink had reached the ears of the Russian Physician's Society. They wished to bring this drink to their patients and so they enlisted the help of Nikolay Balandov, a Russian dairy maker with contacts in the Caucasus Mountains. Balandov decided that the easiest way to



procure the renowned Kefir grains was to utilise the charms of his very attractive employee Irina Sakharova. She was to capture the attention of the Caucasian prince Bek-Mirza Barchorov and persuade him into giving her some kefir grains.

Prince Barchorov refused Irina's request and she left the mountains to return to Russia. But the prince sent a team to capture her and bring her back to be his bride.

She was eventually rescued by a daring rescue from Balandov and his team, and eventually the prince was brought to trial before the Czar for his actions. His forced payment to Irina for his misdeed? A full 10 pounds of kefir grains!

In 1908 Irina was famed with bringing the first batch of Kefir grains into Moscow where it was used, medicinally at first in health sanatoriums as a treatment for tuberculosis and other ailments with great success.

In 1973, at the age of 85, Irina received a letter from the Minister of the Food Industry of the former USSR, expressing grateful acknowledgment of her primary role in bringing Kefir and its benefits to the Russian people.

## What exactly are Kefir grains? Are They Real Grains?

Kefir grains are not real grains but are called that simply based on their appearance. They are 100% wheat and gluten free!

They are technically a SCOBY which stands for Symbiotic Colony Of Bacteria & Yeast. They are a live complex combination of organisms that coexist in perfect harmony.



If given the right environment they will continuously create new batches of kefir every day and produce new grains abundantly indefinitely.

## What are some of the benefits of drinking Kefir?

Kefir is considered by many to be a super food. And I can tell you from personal experience when we are drinking it regularly we feel better, catch fewer colds, almost never get stomach viruses, and have a more effective and regular bowel movements.

It is also still an integral part of the diet of the people of the Caucasus Mountains which boasts astounding longevity and health.

*"In a further breakdown of official figures, one out of every 300 Abkhazians is 100 years old or over. For comparison, note that in the U.S. only 1 in 33,333 reach 100 years of age. "*

A recent study (2014) done by a University in

Turkey concluded:

*"In addition to beneficial bacteria and yeasts, kefir contains vitamins, minerals and essential amino acids that aid in homeostasis. Various microorganisms, such as Shewanella, Acinetobacter, Pelomonas, Dysgonomonas and Weissella, have been detected in kefir. Lactic acid, acetic acid, pyruvic acid, hippuric acid, propionic acid, butyric acid, diacetyl and acetaldehyde formed during kefir fermentation were also determined to contribute to its taste and aroma. The benefits of consuming kefir are numerous, including antibacterial, immunological, anti-tumoural, anti-carcinogenic and hypo-cholesterolaemic effects and B-galactosidase activity."*

I'm no scientist but between the real life testimonials and the facts from researching professionals the choice was easy for us!

## Can I just buy storebought kefir?

Yes you can drink purchased kefir but you will only receive a portion of the benefits. Most

store bought kefir is produced via a culture which they made by isolating usually around 10-12 strains of bacteria. That is pale in comparison to homemade which has often shown 35 or more strains! There is also so much of how kefir works that is not fully understood by science that we always err on the side of traditional homemade.

Store bought kefir is also frequently filled with commercial stabilizers, sweeteners and powdered dry milk which we choose not to consume.

### Can I Drink Kefir If I Am Lactose Intolerant or Allergic to Dairy?

Maybe! If you are truly allergic to dairy, kefir will probably not help as it doesn't remove the milk proteins. If you are primarily allergic to whey you may be able to tolerate strained kefir which has the bulk of the whey discarded.

But if you have a lactose intolerance problem it is highly likely you will be able to tolerate homemade kefir!

The kefir grains consume the majority of the lactose in the milk in the fermentation process, making it often a great option for people with lactose intolerance. You may find that you are only able to tolerate kefir made from raw milk (due to increased enzymes), several of my friends who choose to abstain from dairy normally have experimented with this with good success.

*Studies have shown that Kefir can actually help to improve the entire digestive system including aiding in healing a lactose intolerance problem!*

\*Store bought kefir does not include the same level of probiotics and is often thickened after processing with powdered non-fat milk so it is likely not to be tolerated as well or at all.

### Are there non-dairy Kefir options?

Yes! You can make non-dairy kefir with coconut milk and we highly recommend it! Full fat is our preference and its rich and creamy. We even encourage people who are not dairy-free to consider adding in alternative milk kefirs to their diet to help provide variety and nutrients they may miss out on otherwise.

You can also use soy milk and almond milk etc. Though we do not recommend consuming soy products on a regular basis. It is important to note that the kefir grains will not reproduce in non-animal "milk" and may eventually die.

To help this you can put them in a batch of regular milk and let them go through a 24 hour process. Then rinse them with your preferred alternative milk. Or you can switch them back and forth from an alternative milk to animal milk every other day indefinitely.

Reports online range from them needing to be reset every few days in regular milk to up to 2 weeks between a reset.

This could depend on the health of your grains too I would imagine. Dom's kefir site has some great info on [alternative milk kefirs](#).

### Where can I get authentic kefir grains?

- Friends & Family (request on Facebook)
- Craigslist and other ad sites
- eBay & [Amazon](#)
- This [Facebook group](#) (be sure to check out the local exchange list first = 100% free)
- [The Kefir Lady](#)

Note: DO NOT BUY DEHYDRATED GRAINS. They take weeks to rehydrate and work properly!

### Does Kefir contain alcohol?

Yes. Homemade kefir averages between 1/8th to up to 3 percent of alcohol by volume. Before you get too worried, allow me to explain more!

The volume of alcohol is lowest when cultured for 12-24 hours without an additional ripening time and when cultured with a loose fitting cloth (this is how we culture it and what we recommend if you are looking to limit your alcohol consumption the absolute most).

Locking the cap down during initial fermentation and/or performing a secondary fermentation with an oxygen deprived environment is what causes a fizzy bubbly drink and increase in the alcohol content.

As a personal testimony I am extremely sensitive to alcohol...even just a few sips (I'm quite a cheap date!) and have never had any sensations from drinking up to 2 cups of kefir fermented in this way.

I also drink similar amounts that have been ripened in the fridge with no noticeable sensations.

### Is kefir safe for children? What about drinking it while I am pregnant?

Absolutely! We have always been given an absolutely enthusiastic response from our doctors and midwives in regards to kefir. I give my children up to 8 ounces of kefir smoothie everyday and drank it consistently throughout both of my pregnancies and while I nursed them.

*Many religions who believe in abstaining from alcohol consider the amount of alcohol in kefir ripened for 12-24 hours so negligible that it is not classified as a problem. It is of course best to check with your own mentors if you have any questions or concerns. Most readers with religious beliefs who use kefir choose to abstain from further ripening of the kefir.*





# How To Make Kefir at Home

You will need:

- 1-3 tablespoons healthy milk kefir grains
- 1 pint animal milk (cow/goat/sheep)
- a quart or pint mason jar (or similar glass container--no plastic and no metal)
- a small cloth
- rubberband or ring of mason jar
- a small strainer (plastic is preferable)
- a spoon or spatula (plastic preferable)

Place kefir grains in bottom of jar and add milk.

A 1:10 ratio is an easy method to follow.

For 1 tablespoon grains I would do about half the pint jar, 3 tablespoons I would start at 2/3 of a pint jar. *Do not fill any container more than 3/4 full or you risk overflow!*

It's not an exact science. If you notice it's taking a long time for the grains to process through the milk, use less milk. If they go really fast, increase your milk levels.

*Tip: As your grains grow you can increase the amount of milk slowly. Once they start culturing too much milk for you each day you are ready to give some grains away!*



*Kefir ready to be processed*



*Kefir seperating from the lighter colored whey*

Cover your container with a towel or napkin and secure it with a rubber band or lid. Place at room temperature out of direct sunlight. If it's very cold (below 60 degrees) tuck it somewhere a bit warmer (65-70 degrees is the happy spot).

If you remember you can give the jar a gentle jostle a couple times a day, this helps the bottom milk ferment better. But 99% of the time I forget to do this and it's still fine.

After 24-48 hours you will notice that the kefir is being to seperate from the whey. This is when I normally process it. You can process before this or after, feel free to taste and see what you like.

To process simply mix gently with spoon in jar to recombine kefir and whey, and strain. Use the plastic spoon to gently lift and turn the grains in the strainer to allow the kefir to release. Do not chop or press the grains into the strainer. There will be a sticky white film (some describe it as slimy) over the grains, this is absolutely normal and does not need to be removed.

Refill your jar with milk and re-cover it .

Your finished kefir can be drank as is, aged further, refrigerated and drank cold, or made into a delicious smoothie. I cannot stomach warm kefir personally but my husband loves it so.....find what works for you!

*Tip: The ferment will put off cO2 so if you'd like to have it slightly fizzy you can experiment with a tightly fitted lid. Monitor it at least once a day to be sure you aren't building up too much pressure.*



*I have used a metal strainer and spoon for years with no issues. As long as it doesn't touch the culture long term it's okay. Do not use metal of anykind for anything that the kefir is stored or cultured in.*



# Introducing Kefir to Your Diet

Introducing kefir to your diet is a for most people and easy welcome addition.

Depending on the health of your diet and current "gut balance" kefir is most often an easy introduction with immediate noticeable improvements. But for some individuals it can be a bit of an upturn of your system as your



body comes back into balance. If you have been consuming high quantities of white flour, white sugar, caffeine or processed foods you may have a period of time that you feel worse then you felt before you started the kefir.

Symptoms are generally mild and are similar to a detox diet. We recommend starting to add kefir to your diet as THE ONLY change you make to your diet for at least one week. The only other additional change would be to drink at least 8 cups of water each day.

Kefir has the great benefit of helping to regulate bowel movements. You may find that consuming too much kefir upsets your ideal routine in this area and if this occurs will want to scale back until your system adjusts.

For most individuals we start them on 1/2 a cup of kefir the first day and gradually increase to up to 8-15 ounces a day over the course of the first week as long as it is well tolerated. Listen to how it feels at various amounts and adjust.

If you know that you have an extremely sensitive digestive system or suffer from extreme reactions to anything we definitely encourage starting with a smaller amount and/or working with your doctor. But again, most people tolerate kefir without issues.



## Ripening Kefir

Ripening kefir is the process of allowing the processed kefir milk to age further at room temperature or in the refrigerator after you have strained the grains out.

The purpose of doing this is to increase some vitamin content (especially B vitamins like folic acid) and to further decrease the lactose and carbohydrate content of the kefir. This is especially useful for those who struggle with lactose intolerance and for those who are watching their carb or sugar counts.

It also improves the flavor and aromatics of the kefir to some people so can be done purely based on taste as well.

Ripening does increase the alcohol content of kefir towards the higher end of the 2-3 % level most especially when ripened at room temp.

### FRIDGE METHOD

Place kefir in a sealed container in the refrigerator for a minimum of 2 days and a maximum of 2 weeks. The longer it is kept the more sour and tangy it becomes.

### COUNTERTOP METHOD

Pour kefir into a clean glass container that is fitted with an brewing airlock. Remember to leave at least 1/4 of the bottle empty for expansion.

You can either start in one jar and then pour off the desired amount and consume until the bottle is empty. Clean bottle and repeat.

OR

Each day pour off the desired amount and consume. Add the current days kefir to the same bottle and repeat. Wash bottle every 1-2 weeks.





# Classic Green Smoothie

*This is the original smoothie that got us hooked! Mix and match what fruit you can get where you are and sweeten to taste with pineapple if you are new to the flavor of the greens!*

## *Ingredients*

- 12-15 ounces of kefir
- 2 cups frozen baby spinach
- 1-2 frozen bananas (in pieces)
- 1/2 cup frozen fruit
- 1-4 tablespoons crushed pineapple (to taste)

## *Directions*

1. Combine all ingredients and blend on high until smooth and creamy.
2. Add ice cubes if smoothie is not cold enough and blend again.

## *Notes:*

If you struggle with chunks of greens due to a low powered blender try blending just the greens with the kefir first and then add remaining ingredients.



# Blueberry Chia Smoothie

*If you can't bear the thought of your smoothie being green then give this combo a chance! It's the easiest way to sneak all those veggies into kids who aren't accustomed to green smoothies too!*

## *Ingredients*

- 12-15 ounces kefir
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 cups frozen kale
- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 1 frozen banana (in pieces)

Optional:

- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- \*\*1 teaspoon brewers yeast

## *Directions*

1. Combine all ingredients and blend on high until smooth and creamy.
2. Add ice cubes if smoothie is not cold enough and blend again.

## *Notes on Brewers Yeast:*

*\*\*While Brewer's Yeast is extremely beneficial to most, individuals who are: children, pregnant, breastfeeding, have a yeast allergy, Chron's disease, diabetic, suffer from gout or who have any concerns should consult a doctor before using or avoid Brewers Yeast entirely.*

*I have used it without any negative effects (only positive) while pregnant, breastfeeding and for my children in this low dosage amount. As with all ingredients & supplements we rotate them to minimize any potential negative effects.*





# Green Sweetie Smoothie

*Sweet & simple. We mix it up with peaches, pineapple and an avocado for a smooth and creamy finish.*

## *Ingredients*

- 12-15 ounces kefir
- 2 cups frozen spinach
- 1 frozen banana (in pieces)
- 1/2 cup frozen peaches
- 1/4-1/2 cup pineapple bits
- 1/2 of an avocado

## *Directions*

1. Combine all ingredients and blend on high until smooth and creamy.
2. Add ice cubes if smoothie is not cold enough and blend again.



# Orange Power Smoothie

*This smoothie packs a punch! Add in your favorite citrus or a dash of orange juice to really boost the Vitamin C content on this smoothie!*

## *Ingredients*

- 12-15 ounces kefir
- 2 cups frozen mixed greens
- 1 frozen banana (in pieces)
- 1/2 cup frozen peaches
- 1 carrot, chopped small\*\*

Optional:

- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 teaspoon brewers yeast
- 1 scoop \*\*protein powder

## *Directions*

1. Combine all ingredients and blend on high until smooth and creamy.
2. Add ice cubes if smoothie is not cold enough and blend again.

## *Notes on Carrots:*

If you do not have a high speed blender you may wish to omit carrot or cook a batch of carrots until tender and puree. The puree can be frozen in ice cube trays to add to your smoothies.



# Avocado Wake Up Call

*This smoothie is perfect when you are needing something smooth and creamy. Pile in extra greens and up to 2 teaspoons of brewers yeast if you are feeling extra tired.*

## *Ingredients*

- 12-15 ounces kefir
- 2 cups frozen mixed greens
- 1 frozen banana (in pieces)
- 1/2 cup fresh strawberries
- 1/2 cup fresh pineapple
- 1/2 an avocado
- 1 carrot, chopped small\*\*

Optional:

- 1 tablespoon flaxseeds
- 1-2 teaspoon brewers yeast

## *Directions*

1. Combine all ingredients and blend on high until smooth and creamy.
2. Add ice cubes if smoothie is not cold enough and blend again.

## *Notes on Carrots:*

If you do not have a high speed blender you may wish to omit carrot or cook a batch of carrots until tender and puree. The puree can be frozen in ice cube trays to add to your smoothies.



# Helpful Gear & Ingredients

## Protein Powders:

It is very important to carefully read what is contained in a protein powder. Look for powders that contain no additives or extra sweeteners. Sugar, cane sugar, evaporated cane juice, corn syrup, stevia, splenda, sucralose, xylitol, etc should all be avoided if at all possible. If completely unavoidable Stevia is the least offensive.

[Naked Whey Protein Powder](#) is an excellent grass fed whey protein that is processed at low temperatures to maintain the best nutrient content.



[Nutiva Hemp Protein Powder](#) is a great source of vegan protein that is processed at low temperatures to maintain the best nutrient



[Nutiva Chia Seeds](#) are a rich source of essential Omega-3 fatty acids, protein, antioxidants and fibers.



## High Powered Blenders:

Having a high powered blender is crucial to sustaining an obsessive green smoothie habit. An inexpensive blender will work pretty well for a while but eventually you will find that you are burning through blenders every year or so.

My favorite blender is the [Blendtec Designer 625 Blender with the Wildside Jar](#). It is incredibly easy to use and clean and I use it for EVERYTHING. I have replaced my grain mill and frequently use their Twister Jar in place of my food processor.

The [Vitamix 5200 Series Blenders](#) are also equally high powered and impressive. They offer a slightly different design, do not use preset cycles and are slightly taller than the Blendtec. Reviewers are equally split on these two machines because they really each do an amazing job.



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