

# COLLECTING YEAST (in your backyard)

**What is yeast?** Yeast are single-celled fungi that, when colonizing a sugar- rich solution, metabolize sugars and give off two important byproducts: alcohol and carbon dioxide. This process is called fermentation.

**Where are yeast?** Yeast are everywhere! However, there are twelve genera of yeasts most suitable for fermentation. These yeasts, because of their desire for sugar, are highly concentrated on fruit.

**To begin brewing** with your own wild yeast, you will need to first create a "starter:" essentially a mini batch of beer. You can make a small amount of wort using any recipe, but a 1:10 ratio of grain to water is a good place to start. You can choose whether or not to add hops to your starter, but a 20 minute boil with hops can keep away unwanted bacteria.

You want to make enough starter to fill a mason jar up half way. If you want to try to collect wild yeast from multiple locations, then make enough starter to half- fill as many jars as locations.

Pour the liquid into sanitized mason jars and cover them with cheesecloth affixed with either a rubberband or a screwtop jar ring.

Place the mason jars in your desired yeast collection location for approximately 24 hours. You can collect wild yeast from anywhere you'd like but under a fruit tree or shrub, in a vegetable garden, or under a coniferous tree are all desirable sites.



Bring the mason jars inside the next day. You may already see signs of fermentation (CO2 bubbles). Remove the cheesecloth and put under an airlock. Store in a dark room, optimally 60-70F. It may take anywhere between 1 day and 2 weeks to see activity.



Once fermentation slows down, it is a good idea to "step up" your starter. Discard half of your starter, trying to get rid of the liquid while keeping the bottom sediment (this is your yeast) and add new wort liquid. This gives your collected yeast new sugar to eat.

After you've stepped up your starter at least once, you are ready to brew with your collected yeast. You can use any recipe of your choosing, but saisons or American ales lend themselves well to wild yeasts, due to the sour flavors that are often imparted by wild yeast strains..

For each gallon of beer you brew, use 200mL of your yeast starter. Use a baster (or a pipette) to extract yeast from the bottom of your starter to add to cooled (70F) wort. Beer made with wild yeast should be left in a primary fermenter for at least 2 weeks, but longer if fermentation activity hasn't stalled.

**A Note on Safety:** Some potentially harmful microbes can also be captured in this process. Always let the starter ferment for at least 2 weeks before tasting. Always practice common sense. As a general rule, if it smells sweet or fruity, you probably have something good. If it smells bad, throw it out and try again.