

EASY BOKASHI

Bokashi is a practical and convenient method for turning your food scraps into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner.

Rather than composting, bokashi ferments or pickles your food waste. 'Bokashi' is a Japanese word for 'fermented organic matter'. The bokashi is a special mix of crushed grains that have been infused with beneficial microbes. This mix is added to your food scraps in a uniquely designed, sealed and air-tight bucket for indoor use.

Fermentation is a quicker process than composting and produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions. The fermented product breaks down quickly once dug into your garden soil. The bokashi home composting system is great for recycling all food scraps, including meat and dairy, which don't usually break down well in other home composting systems.



1.

SET UP YOUR KITCHEN

Find a spot in or near your kitchen for the 20L bokashi bucket, close to where you will have the most food scraps. Bokashi buckets and grain mix are available at some garden centres or from online retailers. It is even possible to make your own.

The bokashi bucket is designed to sit on a bench or under the sink for convenience.

2.

HOW TO USE YOUR BOKASHI

Add a generous handful of bokashi grain to the bottom of the bucket to start.

Chop or mash your kitchen scraps into small pieces, place into the bucket and sprinkle a handful of bokashi grain over the top. As a general guide, add 1 tablespoon of bokashi mix for every cup of food waste. Chopping the food scraps into smaller pieces speeds up the fermentation process.

Mash down the scraps every time you add bokashi grain to remove any air pockets from the layers and ensure you seal the lid well to reduce the oxygen inside and create ideal conditions for the fermentation process. A properly sealed bucket will also deter insects, rodents and any odour.

Repeat this process until the bucket is full, which is usually 3-4 weeks for the average household.

When the bucket is full, top it off with a generous layer of bokashi grain, seal with the lid and leave the bucket to ferment in a cool, dark place for a week. During this waiting time you can place food scraps in your organics bin (loose or wrapped on newspaper).

After a week, bury the bucket contents in your garden soil, at least 30cm deep, where it will continue to break down into humus within 2-3 weeks.

Rinse the bucket with fresh water every time you empty it and repeat the steps above for recycling your food scraps. Do not use any soap or detergent to clean the bucket as this will kill the microbes.

If your bokashi bucket does not smell, it is working correctly.



3.

What to add

Almost any food waste including:

- All fruit & veggie scraps
- Tea leaves & tea bags
- Coffee grounds
- Bread & cake
- Cheese & solid dairy products
- Pasta & rice
- Leftover cooked food
- Cooked and uncooked meat & fish
- eggs

What NOT to add*

- Liquids such as milk, fruit juice or water
- Large bones
- Foods that are rotted or mouldy
- Foods contaminated by chemicals
- Dog and cat poo
- Packaging materials such as foil or plastic

* Large bones, rotted food and pet poo can go in your organics bin.

TIP

Use a little more bokashi grain than usual if adding high protein foods such as fish, meat, eggs & cheese.



4.

HARVESTING AND USING THE BOKASHI JUICE

The food waste should ferment and come to look like it is pickled. It will not actually decompose in the bucket – this happens once the bucket contents are buried in your garden.

The bokashi bucket has a strainer that allows liquid to drain to the bottom, where there is a tap to drain out the nutrient-rich liquid, which is alive with effective micro-organisms and makes a terrific, nutrient-rich soil fertiliser. Use one teaspoon of bokashi juice to 2-3 litres of water in a watering can and apply to your garden or pot plants. Always dilute the juice first before putting on your plants.

The liquid should be drained from the bucket once or twice a week. The bokashi juice cannot be stored and needs to be used within 24 hours after draining it from the bucket.

If you go away on holidays, drain the bucket before you leave and make sure that there is a cover of bokashi grains on top of the food scraps. Ensure that the lid is properly sealed and then enjoy your break.



5.

SOLVING PROBLEMS WITH SMELL

If your bokashi bucket starts to develop a strong smell, or if it appears to have black or blue fungi, this indicates there is contamination. This could be caused by:

- the lid not being closed tightly after each use
- not enough bokashi grains being added
- not draining the liquid regularly enough
- prolonged direct exposure to sunlight or extreme temperatures

To fix smelly bokashi, find a spot to bury it in the garden and dig a hole 30cm deep. Place three handfuls of bokashi grain in the hole and tip in the food scraps. Mix in some soil and then cover with some more bokashi grains before filling in the hole with soil.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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