

# Bokashi Instructions from **MyCrobz**

...the best way to recycle food waste - **all your food waste** - fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy, cooked foods, paper, bones and more

This guide will explain:

- Bokashi basics
- Set up and Daily use
- Why not to use a tap
- What to do when your waste is fermented
- Troubleshooting

Download our 'Bokashi Quick Guide' for easy reference

## **Bokashi Basics**

Bokashi (pronounced **bo-KAW-she**) is a Japanese term meaning 'fermented organic matter' and refers to a method of indoor composting that uses beneficial micro-organisms to quickly ferment any type of food waste - including fruit, vegetables, meat, bones, bread, dairy, paper and cooked foods.

It is a 2 stage process that produces no gas, heat or foul smells - and returns all the nutrients in your waste back into the soil.

The first step - fermentation - takes place indoors in your Bokashi Bucket. It takes about 2 weeks for your food waste to fully ferment. It will still look like it did when you put it in weeks ago - but that is just an illusion - the cell structure has been altered and it will quickly break down during the next step.

The second step - decomposition - is done in the garden, compost pile or even your own little soil factory. Most waste will be indistinguishable from the soil in a week or two and even bones and corn cobs will seem to have disappeared in about a month. While the waste is decomposing it is still quite acidic and we recommend you do not plant directly into it for at least 10 days.

The active ingredients in the process are the micro-organisms - a combination of lactic acid bacteria, photosynthetic bacteria, and yeast - that in effect 'pickle' your waste. The MyCrobz (as we like to call them) are present in our

Bokashi Starter (fermented wheat bran or sawdust) which is sprinkled over layers of food waste as you fill your bucket.

A healthy Bokashi Bucket does not create bad odours, greenhouse gas, or heat - uses no power, and is completely natural. What you should smell when you open the bucket is a slightly sweet, fermented (sour), perhaps slightly alcoholic odour and it should not be offensive. Of course, that is only if your Bokashi Bucket is healthy - **so please read the following carefully** - and let's get started.

## **Getting Started**

If you haven't purchased one of our Bokashi Home Kits you are going to have to locate a couple of food grade 5 gallon buckets with air-tight lids.

Before putting the first waste into your Bokashi Bucket, all you have to do is:

- Add about 2 litres of absorbent material (peat, hardwood sawdust, shredded newspaper, or even garden soil (as long as it's bone dry) to the bottom of the bucket
- Sprinkle a small handful (2-3 TBSP) of Bokashi Starter over the absorbent material

That's it, now you are ready to go.

## **Daily Use**

To use your Bokashi Bucket - simply follow these 5 easy steps and keep our Quick Guide near your bucket for easy reference.

1. **COLLECT** your food waste (cut up large bits) in a 3-4 litre container (no lid)
2. **DUMP** it into the bucket daily or when it's full (don't let it rot)
3. **SQUISH** with a potato masher (or something similar) to remove air pockets
4. **SPRINKLE** a small handful of Bokashi Starter over the waste (2-3 Tbsp)
5. **CLOSE** by replacing the lid for an air-tight seal

That's about it - repeat as necessary.

The only other thing that you should keep an eye on is the moisture level in the bucket. That's because the optimum moisture level for Bokashi fermentation is only 60-65% moisture and most food waste is 80-95% water. The Starter and other dry waste that you add usually balances this out - and the absorbent on

the bottom collects what leaches out - but if it gets too wet in your bucket it will begin to rot and smell bad.

The easiest way to check this is when you are adding waste. If it feels (or sounds) really wet when you are squishing it down - then it's a good idea to add some type of absorbent or extra Starter. And if you know the waste you are adding is too wet; then throw in some paper or other dry waste to balance it out.

It is rare that a bucket is too dry. However, if it is, the waste will not ferment and will be difficult to breakdown once added to soil. So if you think your bucket is too dry just spray (or pour) some water over the Starter before you close the lid.

When you eventually dump the fermented waste out of your Bucket you will be able to observe the absorbent you placed on the bottom. If it is sopping wet - your waste is very wet - next bucket add more dry waste as you go. If it is bone dry - your waste is very dry - next bucket add more wet waste or water as you go. And if the absorbent is anywhere in between - you are doing a great job!

### **Why don't you recommend Buckets with taps?**

You may be asking this question if you are familiar with the commercially available Bokashi buckets which come with a tap on the front - and the simple answer is we recommend the use of an absorbent instead.

A tap is used to drain the liquid runoff created by the fermentation process that is often called Bokashi Juice. This Juice is a very potent fertilizer that people have been encouraged to collect via this tap, dilute with water, and then feed it to their happy plants. Great...however there are downsides to Juice collection - awful smells, nightmare clean ups, and the fact that many people create waste that produces little or no Juice at all. These downsides are not often discussed so many people have been put off the Bokashi process simply because of the problems associated with managing their Juice.

At MyCrobz we have done extensive research and testing over the last few years on every type of Bokashi container and we have concluded that it's just not worth collecting the Juice separately - and that simpler is so much better.

The absorbent you add to the bottom of your bucket will absorb the Juice and preserve it so that it is added back to the soil at the end of the process with

the rest of the fermented waste - so no nutrients are lost. And if you really want to make free liquid fertilizer for your plants; just use the fermented waste and/or the Juicy absorbent to make your own amazing compost tea.

### **My Bucket is Full - Now What?**

Once your Bokashi Bucket is full it needs to be left alone for 2 weeks so that the last waste you put in has a chance to fully ferment. That is why you need at least 2 buckets - one to use while the first is finishing its ferment.

When your Bokashi Bucket is full, put it aside, and start using your second one. In 2 weeks the first Bucket will be ready for decomposition and at that point you have a few options:

**Garden:** Dig a small trench about 30 cm (1 foot) deep - dump in your fermented waste - break it up with a shovel - cover it over with at least 10 cm (4") of soil and keep moist.

Do not plant on this spot for 10 days but it is safe to dig the trench between rows of vegetation or around the drip line of a tree.

**Compost:** Simply dig the fermented waste into your compost pile and keep it moist. It will break down quickly and activate the rest of the pile. In this way it works as a compost accelerant and if there is organic matter in the pile it will heat up like traditional compost.

**Soil Factory:** To create your own soil factory you will need a large open container or tub. First add a layer of regular soil, and then dump in the contents of your Bokashi Bucket. At this point you can also add leaves, charcoal or additional composted material to improve texture. Mix whatever you add with some regular soil - then top off with another 10 cm (4 inches) of regular soil. Keep moist (not wet) and after a few weeks (or in the spring) your nutrient rich probiotic potting soil will be ready to use.

**Feed:** Your fermented waste can be fed directly to worms, chickens, or pigs. Remember it is quite acidic so start them off slow by introducing a bit at a time.

**Wait:** Or you can just leave your Bucket (up to 6 months) till you are ready to dump it. This can be useful during a long winter - and if you need to use your

bucket again you can just transfer the contents to a large garbage bag, close it up, leave it in the snow, and wait for spring.

Once you have emptied the fermented waste; give your bucket a good rinse and if it smells a bit - spray it with 1-Solution, leave it for a minute then wipe it out.

## **Trouble Shooting**

First of all - **white mould is good!** Some people are a little put off by the site of it at first but it is perfectly normal (and expected) in a healthy Bokashi Bucket (especially if your kitchen is warm or your lid is just a little loose).

That being said; there will be signs (and smells) if something is wrong. When it comes to Bokashi - the nose knows! If something has gone wrong it will no longer smell slightly fermented and will begin to smell rotten or putrefied - and you may even notice black or green mould starting to grow.

The likely causes of the problem are either:

- Too much wet waste
- Not enough Bokashi Starter
- Already rotten waste was added
- Or, the lid didn't create an air-tight seal

The important thing is not to worry as all is not lost and you have a few options:

1. The best approach is to first make sure your waste is compacted, add 2 handfuls of Bokashi Starter, seal the lid and put aside for a day or two
2. If that doesn't solve the problem, then sprinkle a handful of sugar over the contents of the bucket and wait another day.
3. If your Bokashi Bucket still smells bad - something is definitely wrong and we recommend that you bury the contents somewhere out of the way and a little deeper than normal (as it is now an animal attractant). Leave it to decompose and give the bucket a good clean.

If you have questions you can visit our website at [www.mycrobz.com](http://www.mycrobz.com)

# Happy Bokashiing