

Keeping (and harvesting) Vinegar Eels

By Earl Blewett

Vinegar eels are the easiest live food to grow and used to be the most annoying to harvest. They stay near the surface of the water and live for a long time once you add them to a fry tank.

Keeping Vinegar Eels

1. Use a 1 litre or larger bottle. I prefer glass but other people use 2 litre pop bottles. A gallon jar is great as you can get the apple pieces in easily.
2. Cut up one or two apples into big pieces and put them in the jar.
3. Dilute apple cider vinegar with de-chlorinated tapwater and fill the jar to near the top
4. The lid must admit air freely. I stop the top of my bottles with a foam plug or filter floss. The worms need the oxygen.
5. Add your starter culture and put the bottle on a rack in a quiet place
6. After 1-2 weeks you should be able to see vinegar eels near the surface (use a flashlight)
7. I maintain two bottles and try to re-start one every six months. I've left cultures going for years, if you continue to add apple and new vinegar.

Harvesting Vinegar Eels

1. Siphon the culture medium from near the surface into a container with a long narrow neck. Beer bottles or vases will work. I have a 500 ml volumetric flask that is great.
2. You want to add enough culture to fill halfway up the narrow neck
3. I have a piece of filter floss on fishline that I push down the neck of the bottle to the surface of the medium
4. Fill the rest of the narrow neck with de-chlorinated water.
5. Wait 12 – 24 hours until the vinegar eels migrate through the medium and filter floss up into the water. They are trying to get to the more oxygenated medium.
6. Use a eye dropper to pull off the water containing the vinegar eels and feed to your fry.

