KOMBUCHA: Ancient immortal elixir

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Known as the “Immortal Health Elixir” by the Chinese, kombucha (kom-bu-cha) originated in Asia over 2,000 years ago. The fact that this beverage is still consumed today is a strong testimonial to the health benefits kombucha continues to bring to millions of people. In the 1990s, kombucha was found mostly in health food stores and hippie kitchens. These days, however, kombucha has grown in popularity and is now commercially available in most grocery stores.

Kombucha is a fermented beverage, made with tea, sugar and the SCOBY (Symbiotic Colony of Bacteria and Yeast) also known as the “mother.” The SCOBY is responsible for initiating the fermentation process, using the sugar for food. Once the beverage becomes fermented, it becomes carbonated and contains a high concentration of b-vitamins, enzymes, probiotics, glucosamines and antioxidants. That makes kombucha a powerful detoxifier that can help improve immunity, reduce arthritis and joint pain, assist with weight loss, and improve energy. The high levels of probiotics and beneficial acids aid in the prevention of leaky gut, stomach ulcers, candida overgrowth and GERD.

The taste of kombucha is best described as “carbonated apple cider.” Commercial komubcha can be high in sugar and quite expensive, but kombucha can be made inexpensively, and with less sugar, at home. When brewing at home, be sure to use sterile equipment, a clean workspace and high-quality ingredients.

Kombucha

*Makes 8 cups*

Needed:

1 large, wide-mouthed glass jar\*

Paper towels to cover the top

1 SCOBY disk (can be purchased at a health food store, online or gotten from a friend who is already brewing)

8 cups of spring or distilled water

½ cup of organic cane sugar or raw honey\*\*

5 organic black, green or white tea bags (no herbal tea)

1 cup pre-made kombucha (from the store or a friend who is already brewing)

A wooden spoon

\**You want to avoid using a plastic jar because the chemicals in the plastic can leak into the kombucha during fermentation process and can be hazardous to your health.*

*\*\* Most of the sugar is “eaten” by the yeast during the fermentation process so by the time you consume it, there is little sugar left.*

Directions:

Bring the eight cups of water to a boil in a big pot. Once it comes to a boil, remove the pot from the heat and add the sugar, stirring until it dissolves. Next, place the teabags in the water and steep for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove and discard the tea bags, and let the mixture cool to room temperature (usually takes about one hour). Once the mixture has cooled, pour it into your big glass jar, drop in your SCOBY and one cup of pre-made kombucha.

Cover your jar with the paper towel, and secure with a rubber band. Stir daily with a wooden spoon and allow the kombucha to sit for 10 to 14 days, depending on the flavor you are looking for. The longer the batch sits, the stronger the taste. Check every couple days to see if it has reached the right taste and desired level of carbonation. Once you are happy with the taste, pour your kombucha into smaller glass bottles with air-tight lids and leave on the counter for a day or two to finish fermentation process. If desired, you can add fresh-squeezed lemon, lime, berries, ginger, or turmeric root before refrigerating. Once refrigerated, it is ready to drink!

Each time you brew a batch, the SCOBY grows a new layer below the first one. You can use the newly-formed layer to create a new batch, store it or throw it away.

Start by drinking a small amount in moderation in order to see if you have any negative reactions, like an upset stomach. Eventually, you can work your way up to eight ounces a day. Groups who should limit their kombucha consumption include pregnant and nursing women, or those with a compromised immune system.