



Kombucha Revolution: 75 Recipes for Homemade Brews, Fixers, Elixirs, and Mixers

By Stephen Lee, Ken Koopman

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This guide from the founder of Kombucha Wonder Drink demystifies the process of brewing kombucha at home and offers recipes for using it in infusions, smoothies, cocktails, and more.

The Wonder Drink

Kombucha—a fizzy, fermented tea-based beverage packed with probiotics, vitamins, and enzymes—has home brewers salivating. And who better to guide you through the brewing process than a tea guru with more than forty years of experience under his belt? Stephen Lee, cofounder of Tazo Tea and Stash Tea, turned his attention to fermented tea and founded Kombucha Wonder Drink in 2001. In *Kombucha Revolution*, Lee reveals the secrets to brewing the perfect batch of kombucha and caring for your very own SCOBY (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast). He also shares his favorite recipes—plus contributions from brewers, bartenders, and chefs like “Kombucha Mamma” Hannah Crum and Wildwood’s Dustin Clark—for infusing your brew with fruits, herbs, and spices, and incorporating it into juices, smoothies, sauces, snacks, sweets, and cocktails.

With recipes for Lavender–Green Tea Kombucha, Cranberry Bitters Cocktails, Kombucha Vinegar, Green Smoothies, Kombucha Lime Ceviche, and Kombucha Pear Sorbet, mixing this healthful brew into your everyday lifestyle has never been so revolutionary.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Whether you’re first hearing about kombucha right this second or you’ve been filling your fridge with it for years, spend ten minutes with *Kombucha Revolution* and you’ll be leaping from your seat to try brewing it. Even as a longtime kombucha brewer myself, I found Stephen Lee’s detailed recipes for making and using kombucha to be eye-opening. He’s doing things with kombucha that I never imagined, and I can’t wait to try every single one of them.”

—Emma Christensen, recipe editor at The Kitchn and author of *True Brews*

About the Author

STEPHEN LEE has cofounded and sold two of the country's best-known tea brands, Tazo Tea and Stash Tea. After discovering kombucha on one of his tea importing trips to Russia, Stephen launched Kombucha Wonder Drink in 2001. It can now be found in natural foods stores, grocery stores, pubs, spas, hotels, college campuses, and coffee and tea houses across the country. He also recently launched Tea Tibet, a not-for-profit tea company benefiting Tibet.

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Introduction

Kombucha. It’s been called the “elixir of life,” a cure-all that detoxifies the body, aids digestion, reenergizes the mind, and even helps reverse the symptoms of cancer. Drink several glasses of this fermented tea a day and, according to some, its healing properties will lower cholesterol, help with weight loss, reduce hot flashes, and create a general sense of well-being.

Its origins are shrouded in mystery. Two-thousand-year-old fables tell of exhausted warriors rejuvenating their weary bodies by drinking a fermented concoction infused with tea leaves. Even its name, pronounced com-BOO-cha, connotes something both alien and ancient. Nobody seems to know where it came from or how long it’s been around.

I discovered kombucha on one of my many tea-selling trips to Russia. I had been in the tea business for more than twenty years at the time, and while I had heard about this exotic tea drink called kombucha, I had never tasted it. One night I was having dinner with an associate at his St. Petersburg apartment. Peter lived with his mother—I knew her only as Mrs. Lisovski—and after a wonderful meal of borscht, piroshkies, and lots of pickled vegetables, I excused myself to use their loo. On my way down the narrow hall, I looked through an open door on my right and saw something strange.

There, on the nightstand next to Mrs. Lisovski’s bed, was a one-gallon jug of brownish liquid with cheesecloth stretched over the top. I felt ridiculously guilty peering into the bedroom of an eighty-year-old woman, but I couldn’t resist taking a closer look at that jar. Straining my eyes in the dim light, I saw something really odd. There was a pancake-sized gelatinous blob floating on top of the fluid.

When I returned to the kitchen, I admitted to Peter that I had looked into his mother’s bedroom, and then rather sheepishly asked what was in the glass jar. He laughed and then reached into the refrigerator. He pulled out a pitcher and poured us both a glass. “It’s kombucha. My mother calls it mushroom tea,” he told me.

When I tasted Mrs. Lisovski's brew, I was amazed. There was effervescence to it—the lightly carbonated beverage tickled my tongue—with a tanginess that my taste buds told me was like an apple cider flavor. The finish was slightly acidic, yet the overall mouth feel was very pleasurable. I had never experienced anything like it.

I begged for the story behind this wonderful drink. Through Peter's translation, Mrs. Lisovski related the story of how her great aunt from Siberia had passed down the recipe for her chainii grib. She received her "mother" culture in 1939 and had been making a batch every week since. I later did the math and marveled at the fact I was drinking batch number 2,860 of Mrs. Lisovski's personal brew. What blew me away was before I left the apartment, the lovely little lady presented me with a peeled-off section of this grayish-white patty (think bottom half of a hamburger bun). I knew what it was (after all, I had spied it on her nightstand), but I didn't know what I was supposed to do with it. Peter explained that it was common practice for anyone who made "mushroom tea" to peel off the top layer of the "mother" and give it to a neighbor or friend so they could use it to make their own batch of kombucha.

What Is Kombucha?

Kombucha is a fermented beverage made with brewed tea, sugar, and bacteria that is introduced from a starter culture. Depending on the amount of sugar used, fermentation time, and temperature, the flavor of any one kombucha can range from tart to sour to tangy. Large-scale manufacturers as well as home brewers blend kombucha with herbs, fruit, spices, infused teas, and other flavors to create their own concoctions.

The key to kombucha's existence is the mother, a live starter culture similar to a sourdough bread starter. Referred to in the industry as a SCOBY (Symbiotic Colony of Bacteria and Yeast), this rubbery substance kicks off the fermentation process and ultimately forms a pancake-size disk that looks like the top of a mushroom (thus, the reason why for centuries the drink was called "mushroom tea"). Historically, fermentation has been celebrated for creating alcoholic beverages like mead, beer, and wine, but it is also valued for its usefulness in preserving foods (who can forget Grandma's pickled cucumbers?). For the purposes of this book, fermentation can be defined as the transformation of food by various bacteria, fungi, and the enzymes they produce. This process involves anaerobic metabolism, the production of energy from nutrients without oxygen. (For more about fermentation, I recommend reading Sandor Katz's *The Art of Fermentation*.) Regarding the question "Is there alcohol in kombucha?" home brewers can expect an alcohol content of below 0.5 percent. Commercially sold kombucha brewed to create an alcohol content higher than 0.5 percent may only be purchased by those twenty-one years and older.

Kombucha is alive, teeming with beneficial microorganisms and active bacterial cultures that, much like the live cultures in yogurt, provide the body with a great source of nutrition. With its probiotic properties that help balance the "good" and "bad" bacteria in the intestinal tract, kombucha is regarded by many as a "wonder" food as opposed to just a healthy drink. But even though this magical tonic has been around for centuries and is chock-full of probiotics, B vitamins, and amino acids, its purported health benefits remain unproven.

Users Review

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