

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S Herbal Legacy Newsletter

January 18, 2012

Kombucha –Mishelle Knuetson MH

There appears to be a reawakening to cultured and fermented foods. In the past, many people used fermentation to preserve food. Now we are recognizing the great health benefits that come from cultured and fermented foods. These types of foods contain the probiotics that the body uses to aid in digesting proteins and fats more efficiently. They improve the nutritional quality of food, protect us from disease causing organisms (like Candida Albicans) and they boost the immune system. These foods also create an environment that is inhospitable for pathogenic microorganisms (disease causing). Dr. Christopher was well aware that digestion is the foundation of health - that is why he recommended using vinegar in your daily regimen.



A vinegar-like drink that is re-emerging in popularity is Kombucha. The history of Kombucha is legendarily reported back to 220 BC by the Qin Dynasty for a Chinese emperor to use as an elixir. From there it spread throughout Asia. It is purported that in 414 AD a Korean named Dr. Kombu brought this famous tonic to an emperor in Japan and this is where the name was coined. Kombu for the doctor and cha is the Chinese name for tea. Kombu + cha = Kombucha. It has also been said that a “vinegary beverage” was carried into battle by Japanese warriors.

In China traditionally the grandmother cared for the “culture” and then it was passed down from mother to daughter. From China this tradition was spread to Russia and ultimately all of Europe until World War II where rationing made it difficult to find sugar and tea.

Like vinegar, Kombucha uses the same type of “mother” in the fermenting process. The “mother” also known as “culture”, “mushroom” or “baby”, is the colony of bacteria and yeast that works in harmony to convert the nutrient solution into Kombucha. An easy acronym for this culture is SCOBY:

SCOBY =
Symbiotic
Culture
Of
Bacteria &
Yeast

What makes Kombucha different from vinegar is the nutrient solution in which it is brewed. Vinegar uses apple cider where Kombucha uses sweet tea, specifically tea from the plant

Comellia sinensis. All black, white, green, and oolong teas derive from the same plant. It is how they are processed that makes them different. The most common teas used in Kombucha are black and green teas. The reason for this is that many “teas” do not contain what Kombucha needs to brew successfully over time. Some plants that are used in herbal infusions lack the necessary nutrients the culture feeds on in the transformation process. Without some *Comellia sinensis* in the brew, the SCOBY may be harmed by the essential oils in the plant and it will retard the fermentation process and therefore stop the healthful benefits.

The magic of the fermentation process between the tea and the SCOBY is that vitamins and enzymes are produced that weren't there before. Fermentation helps the poly-phenols, tannins, and antioxidants found in the tea to become more bio available (easier for the body to absorb and use).

There has been concern over the possible alcohol and caffeine content of Kombucha, as well as the sugar that is used to make the sweet tea (nutrient solution you add to the SCOBY to make Kombucha). The sugar and compounds of the tea are digested by yeast and bacteria in the fermentation process. This is fuel for the SCOBY.

In the book ***Kombucha*** by Christopher Hobbs, an instructor for the School of Natural Healing, he states “A cup of Kombucha tea (5 oz.) contains up to 5 mg. of caffeine. A strong cup of coffee contains about 100 mg of caffeine. So it is not a significant source of caffeine. Kombucha tea can contain ethyl alcohol ranging from 0.4 to 1.5%, but rarely over 1%. This is a very small amount. Many beverages, even apple juice, contain minute amounts of alcohol.”

Kombucha, for many, is a healthier alternative to soft drinks and gives a person another choice when it comes to a fermented beverage other than vinegar. This drink is a good source of probiotics and enzymes for healthy digestion and it also produces various B vitamins, even B12, and healthy amino acids. Components of the basic brew are: **Nutrient Solution** (Sweet tea) + **Starter Liquid** (start from already brewed batch) + **SCOBY** + **Time** = **Kombucha**

For more information on the constituents found in Kombucha and detailed instructions on brewing, you can purchase the book ***Kombucha*** by Christopher Hobbs from Christopher Publications. There are only a limited number of books on hand (the book is out of print) so it cannot be purchased online. To order call 888-489-0155