

## Food Safety: Kombucha

### What is Kombucha?

Kombucha is produced by fermenting sugared tea using a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY).

### Is it Safe?

Kombucha is safe when properly prepared.

Kombucha is a drink traditionally made by fermenting sweetened tea with what's referred to as a SCOBY (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast).

During the fermentation process, the yeast converts the sugar in the tea to alcohol and the bacteria convert that alcohol to organic acids (such as acetic acid). What results is a refreshing, lightly effervescent and slightly sour drink, not unlike sparkling apple cider – generally non-alcoholic, though trace amounts may remain.

### Commercial vs home made

Commercially made Kombucha is considered by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to be a traditional food, meaning it doesn't require pre-approval and there are no specific quality controls or manufacturing practices for it, other than the general requirement under the Food Act that it be safe and suitable.

**Safety** means a condition in which food, in terms of its intended use, is unlikely to cause or lead to illness or injury to human life or public health.

Food is **unsuitable** if it:

- a) is in a condition that is offensive

- b) is damaged, deteriorated, or perished to the extent of affecting its reasonable intended use
- c) contains, has attached to it, or enclosed within it, any damaged, deteriorated, perished, or contaminated substance or thing to the extent of affecting its reasonable intended use
- d) contains a biological or chemical agent, or other substance or thing, that is foreign to the nature of the food and the presence of which would be unexpected and unreasonable in food prepared or packed for sale in accordance with good trade practice
- e) has packaging that is damaged, deteriorated, perished, or contaminated to the extent of affecting the food's reasonable intended use

### Making Kombucha at home for sale

The State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008, provides criteria in which a Home Base Food Business is permissible with **Complying Development** approval if specific criteria are met. <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/EPI/2008/572>

If you are considering making Kombucha at home for sale, please read Council's factsheet on Home Based Business first.

If the proposed Home Base Food Business does not meet the criteria detailed in that factsheet, then consideration for approval may be given through a **Development Application**.

## Making Kombucha at home for personal use

If you're making Kombucha at home for personal use, it is strongly recommend using glass, stainless steel, or food grade plastic containers. Keeping everything sanitary, including the equipment and your hands.

Yes, there's a small but real danger with preparing your own Kombucha, but it's just like preparing and handling raw meat or making canned goods, where unsanitary conditions and carelessness have a greater chance of contaminating your food stuff with harmful pathogens. Just don't be negligent.

When making Kombucha, the greatest chance of contamination is during fermentation. To minimise your chance of contamination, you can take a few precautions: Keep the Kombucha out of direct sunlight in an open, warm location with good airflow, like the top of your fridge or on your kitchen countertop, away from other objects like plants to avoid cross-contamination. Then make sure your Kombucha falls below pH 4.2 after seven days by using pH testing strips.



## Brewing Kombucha safely

- DO** Clean the kitchen and utensils.
- DO** Wash your hands.
- DO** Select glass, stainless steel, or food grade porcelain/stoneware for your brewing vessel.
- DO** Brew with filtered or purified water.
- DO** Cover securely with a cloth cover or coffee filter and a rubber band.
- DO** Select a warm location with good airflow (e.g. on top of the fridge or on a countertop)
- DO** Give the culture time to ferment and develop.
- DO** Throw away any batch that gets mold.
  
- DON'T** Select non reusable plastic, crystal, decorative ceramic, or most metals for your brewing vessel.
- DON'T** Brew with chlorinated tap water.
- DON'T** Brew with stevia, raw honey or herbal teas.
- DON'T** Cover with cheesecloth. The weave is too loose and will allow in wild bacteria/yeast or fruit flies.
- DON'T** Store in direct sunlight, in a closed cupboard, or in a cool location.

## For further information

For further information regarding planning criteria for home base business, ongoing operation and fit out of a food business at home or general food safety advice, please contact Council on:

**Phone:** 9330 6400

**E-mail:** [mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au)