
American Botanical Council HerbClip

FILE: Kombucha Tea

Date: August 8, 1996

HC 8-8-6-3

To: General Distribution

Re: Kombucha Tea Controversy

Monson, Nancy. Kombucha Tea: A Controversy Brews Among Patients and Physicians. *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*, September/October 1995, pp. 281-283.

An estimated 6 million people in the United States are drinking Kombucha tea, the liquid obtained from brewing and fermenting a Kombucha "mushroom" (actually a symbiotic mixture of yeast and bacteria) in a tea and sugar solution. Some say it is "the ultimate elixir," and is being used medicinally by laypeople for a host of health problems. According to Betsy Pryor of Laurel Farms, the nation's biggest supplier of Kombucha, the symbiotic Kombucha was created thousands of years ago, and has been used for centuries in China and Japan as well as in Europe and Russia for energy and immune-enhancement.

There is anecdotal evidence for Kombucha's healing power, but not much scientific evidence. Mycologist Paul Stamets of Fungi Perfecti, an Olympia, Washington-based fungus cultivation supplies company, has found that Kombucha contains an antibiotic agent. The acidity of the beverage may actually account for reports of its antibacterial properties. Yet concern for the health risks of Kombucha have arisen since one woman became sick and another died from cases of severe acidosis linked to ingestion of Kombucha tea. Unfortunately, since the sugar medium in which the Kombucha is brewed is non-selective, any number of dangerous microorganisms could grow in it. The FDA issued a warning in March 1995, citing the potential for contamination of home-brewed Kombucha.

For more information on Kombucha, one can access the Kombucha Home Page: <http://www.webcom.com/~sease/kombucha/kombucha.html>