



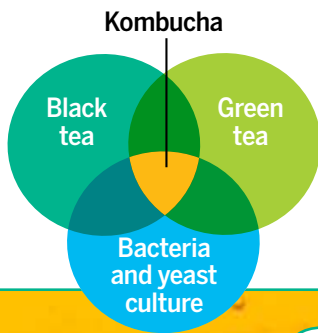
# Would you drink this?

By Amanda Woerner

## START

### Well, what *is* it, anyway?

**Kombucha** is a mix of fermented teas, bacteria and yeast. It usually comes bottled at grocery stores or on tap at cafés. Fans tout its health benefits.



### Everyone is downing it...

Not only health nuts and hipsters.

# 51%

The amount that sales jumped in the last year

### Stay away if...

- It's home-brewed.
- You're pregnant.
- Your immune system is compromised.

DIY kombucha (starter kits do exist) is unpasteurized, so there is a risk for stomach issues and kidney damage. The bottled kind is less likely to harbor harmful bacteria, making it safe for most healthy people, says Andrea N. Giancoli, R.D., spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

### How it rates on the BS meter

So what about all that health hype? Be wary.

#### It will up your energy.



It has about 12 milligrams of caffeine—only a bit more than decaf. Yes, decaf. Sippers say the tea's acids give them a lift, but experts aren't so sure.

#### And take off pounds.



True, some devoted drinkers claim that chugging the tea helps suppress their appetite. The scientific proof? It's very, um, slim.

#### And keep you healthy.



Kombucha's organic acids supposedly flush out toxins and improve digestion, but the research isn't there, so we're not sold.

**The bottom line** If you're thinking *Ew!*, there's no reason to gulp the bitter-tasting brew.

LUCAS ZAREBINSKI; FOOD STYLING, SUSAN OTTAVIANO FOR HALLEY RESOURCES; PROP STYLING, BEVERLEY HYDE. STAT SOURCE (51 PERCENT): SPINSSCAN NATURAL, SPINSSCAN CONVENTIONAL (POWERED BY NIELSEN SCANTRACK) 52 WEEKS ENDING 7/7/12.