Sensory Analysis for Kombucha

A Practical Workshop for Kombucha Producers

Course Title

Sensory Analysis for Kombucha: Basic taste, Aroma Recognition, and Sensory Methods

Course Rationale and Objectives

Kombucha is a complex fermented beverage whose sensory characteristics arise from interactions between tea chemistry, microbial metabolism, and fermentation management. Small variations in raw materials, fermentation conditions, oxygen exposure, or microbial balance can lead to noticeable differences in flavour (odour, taste and mouthfeel).

For kombucha brewers, the ability to **systematically evaluate sensory attributes** is essential for maintaining product consistency, identifying process deviations, and guiding product development. While many producers rely on informal tasting, structured sensory methods allow for **objective evaluation and reproducible communication of flavour attributes**.

This workshop introduces participants to **foundational sensory science concepts** and applies them directly to kombucha evaluation. Participants will learn how the human sensory system functions, how to calibrate perception of basic tastes, and how to recognise key aromas and common off-flavours in kombucha. The course also introduces commonly used sensory methods, including **discriminative** and **descriptive methods**, and provides practical hands-on experience using these techniques.

The overall goal is to provide kombucha brewers with **practical sensory tools that can be implemented in routine quality control and product development**.

Target Audience

This workshop is designed for:

- Kombucha brewers (craft and commercial)
- Fermented beverage producers
- Quality control and quality assurance personnel
- Product developers in the beverage sector
- Sensory professionals interested in fermented beverages
- Brewing and fermentation students

No prior formal sensory training is required.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants should be able to:

- Recognise and correctly identify the **basic tastes** relevant to kombucha
- Understand how **sensory calibration** improves panel reliability

- Apply **discriminative sensory methods** such as ranking tests and triangle tests
- Recognise **key aroma compounds and off-flavours** found in kombucha
- Link sensory defects to **technological or fermentation-related causes**
- Understand the principles of **descriptive sensory analysis (QDA)**
- Understand the value and generally **interpret** descriptive evaluation of kombucha

Deliverables for Participants

Participants will leave the workshop with:

- Practical training in **basic taste calibration**
- Experience conducting **ranking and triangle sensory tests**
- Exposure to **common aroma compounds and off-flavours in kombucha**
- Introduction to **descriptive sensory methods used in beverage evaluation**
- A **structured sensory vocabulary for kombucha**
- Example **sensory evaluation sheets and testing formats**
- Practical knowledge applicable to **quality control and product development**

Course Fee

The participation fee for the **Descriptive Sensory Analysis for Kombucha Workshop** is **200 EUR per person**.

The fee includes:

- Participation in the **4-hour sensory training workshop**
- All **sensory samples and tasting materials**
- Use of **digital sensory evaluation tools during the exercises**
- Workshop materials and documentation

Participants are also invited to attend the **Kombucha Brewers' Stammtisch** following the workshop, providing an opportunity for informal networking and exchange with other kombucha brewers and fermentation professionals.

Conclusion

This workshop provides a practical introduction to sensory analysis tailored specifically to kombucha. Through a combination of theory and guided tasting exercises, participants will develop a better understanding of taste perception, aroma recognition, and structured sensory evaluation methods. The course aims to equip kombucha brewers and beverage professionals with practical tools to assess product quality, identify potential faults, and communicate sensory characteristics more consistently. By applying these techniques, producers can strengthen quality control practices and support more informed product development.

Kombucha Brewers' Stammtisch

Informal Networking & Exchange Session

Following the **Sensory Analysis for Kombucha** workshop, participants are warmly invited to join an informal **Kombucha Brewers' Stammtisch**.

The Stammtisch is intended as a relaxed setting for kombucha brewers, fermenters, and beverage professionals to meet, exchange experiences, and continue discussions initiated during the workshop. It provides an opportunity to talk openly about production challenges, raw materials, fermentation strategies, quality control, and emerging trends in the kombucha sector.

Participants are encouraged to **bring their own kombucha products** for informal tasting and discussion. This is not a formal sensory evaluation, but rather a collegial exchange aimed at learning from each other and fostering professional connections.

The Stammtisch will take place at the **Zunfthaus**, where **beer will be provided by VLB**.

This session is designed to strengthen the kombucha brewing community by creating space for dialogue, peer learning, and collaboration in an informal and welcoming environment.

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Workshop Duration and Programme (4 Hours Total)

Total Duration: 4 hours (including short breaks)

Time	Session
30 min	**Introduction to Sensory Analysis** – Functioning of senses, taste perception, and the basic tastes
20 min	**Practical Exercise:** Recognition of basic tastes in kombucha
20 min	**Theory:** Introduction to common sensory testing methods
40 min	Practical Sensory Exercises: Guided tasting activities and introduction to Digital sensory test design and data collection tools
10–15 min	**Break**
40 min	**Theory:** Aromas and off-flavours in kombucha and their technological origins
45 min	**Practical Aroma Training:** Recognition and evaluation of key kombucha aromas and potential off-flavours
10–15 min	**Break**
20 min	**Theory:** Introduction to descriptive sensory analysis and quality attributes
30 min	**Guided Descriptive Evaluation:** Structured tasting and discussion of a kombucha sample