

Community Profiles

"Fill your life with adventures, not things."

Finnish Proverb

Crisp, bold, bright

These sparkling beverages are teeming with life

As an alternative to spirits, wine or soda pop, locally brewed kombucha has it all: bright colors, inventive flavors and fizzy effervescence. The long fermentation infuses lively probiotics that aid gut health, immune function and pH balance. Here, Janie Otero, owner of Springs Culture Kombucha, shares more about the business of "booch," fire-in-cider, elixir shots and even (get this) kombucha ice cream, an exclusive offered only at Ranch Foods Direct!



DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS.

I make 300 gallons a month on a 28-month fermentation schedule. Then I put it all into 12-ounce bottles and kegs. My biggest customer is a local juice bar. Ranch Foods Direct is my second largest customer. I focus on specialty stores, bars and restaurants. I'm also open one day a week for customers who want to come to my brewing space to get refills.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED?

I signed the lease on my space on March 18, 2020, if you can believe that. Everything was shutting down due to Covid, but I said, "Okay, let's do it." I like to think if I jump in wholeheartedly, the world will catch me. Only by taking great risks can you redeem great rewards. If I can create a vehicle that does for others what it did for me, that's my artistic work. Brewing is all science, and I love science. Having a wholesale business is also great for me, because I like being the wizard behind the curtain.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO TAKE THE LEAP?

It would kill me not to do my dream. You have to get to that point in life where you ask yourself, "What are you afraid of?" After all, I almost died. Years ago, when I found out I had peritoneal mesothelioma, I thought, "I'm only 40, there's no way my story is going to end this way." I did my homework and decided I wanted to live more than anything. I suffered from acidosis for a long time, which is why I started making kombucha in the 1990s — it helps correct the pH in the body. I'm proud of everything that got me to where I am now.

Janie's brewing space is only a few blocks away from Ranch Foods Direct in a warehouse near the corner of Fillmore and Cascade.

ARE YOU A NATIVE?

I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, and I've traveled some, but this is my home. The first time I saw the mountains was when I came here in 1975. I grew up in this town, and I love it.

HOW'S THE FIT SELLING THROUGH RANCH FOODS DIRECT?

I'm so grateful they want to work with me, because I want to work with them! They understand what it means to be grassroots. I love that everything is locally sourced. I think that's critical. If a local butcher is inviting other vendors in, isn't that how a city like Colorado Springs should work?

DESCRIBE YOUR WINTER SEASONAL FLAVORS.

I'm in chai-land right now, with all that warm essence of cardamon and spice. I'll do chai until May, when I'll switch over to hibiscus tea, with its pretty pink color and refreshing floral notes.

ANY HOBBIES?

I love to roller blade, and I love riding bicycles. I started riding because I needed it. Sometimes there's nothing better than just not thinking about anything. To just be in the now. Balance to me is everything. That's why I like making kombucha. It helps with being in the now. Everything seems to happen so quick and fast these days. But this is an organic process you can't speed up.

