

Official Journal of Kombucha Brewers International

SYMBIOSIS

Spring 2022

\$24

LEVELING UP
MARCH 30TH TO APRIL 1ST

K O M B U C H A

20 **K O N** 22





When in Amsterdam, Leave Your Sword

By **SYMBIOSIS Magazine**

Nicolas Adam brings his love of haute cuisine to his small-batch premium kombucha, patisserie, and taproom business. Inspired by the admonition that samurai must heed before entering the sacred confines of the tea ceremony, [Leave Your Sword](#) (LYS) offers a range of bottle conditioned, 'hard' kombucha (2.5% ABV) suitable for food pairing. He also bakes gourmet sweet treats and has a line of kimchi and other tasty treats which delight the international clientele who visit his taproom.

Premium teas, bottle-aged

Adam started brewing kombucha in 2015, partnering with friends from Art School in Amsterdam. After rebranding, he launched LYS in

2018 as a solo operation. Despite the challenges of repeated pandemic lockdowns, he has rolled with the punches, which he described as 'feast or famine.'

He now brews in 100-liter and 75-liter barrels with single-estate teas he sources from the online Dutch vendor [Tea Bar](#). He is aware that tea choice is crucial. He notes that even fine teas can lose their flavor profile when fermented. He is inspired by traditional Chinese tea recipes and natural wine fermentation. Like premium wine, his flavor profiles evolve in the bottle over time. He is proud of serving unfiltered, unpasteurized kombucha with no added flavorings.

Current offerings include Jasmine Blossom-Blended Green Tea, Milky Oolong, Lapsang Fire-Dried Black Tea, and Earl Grey



“My drinks make people see kombucha in a new light. It’s something that happens one person at a time. I see brewing quality kombucha as an art. You can’t put a time frame on that.”

Bergamot-Blended Black Tea Kombucha. He sells 75 cl swing-top bottles, which hold about six glasses and have been standard in the wine industry for centuries.

LYS is currently available at over 30 Amsterdam venues with a liquor license. He plans to scale distribution while maintaining quality. Meanwhile, Adam notes that a premium tea starter takes 10-15 batches over many months to develop the “super clear flavor and depth” he requires.

Chef-owner Joachim De Buck of Amsterdam’s high-end Mexican restaurant [Bacalar Taqueria](#) serves LYS kombucha straight up as well as in their exotic cocktails: “Besides the Milky Oolong that we serve pure, we are using their kombucha in a cocktail called the ‘Bucha Maracuja.’ It’s a delicious mix of mandarin juice, passionfruit, tamarind, and mezcal, shaken over ice



and topped off with the Lapsang kombucha. The kombucha lifts the smokiness of the mezcal and adds a light bubble to the cocktail. The rim of the glass is dipped in ‘sal de Chapulin,’ a salt made with roasted grasshoppers. A slice of fresh orange adds decoration.”

Gastronomy host [Guus Thijssen](#) recommends that diners pair LYS kombucha with fine dining entrees: “Leave your Sword Kombucha is so exciting because the flavor profile lets the character of the tea shine through. There’s nuance in each batch, making it an interesting and new drink every time. For conceptual and unique dinners, this can be chosen for great pairings, as it has such a defining flavor. That said, it may be even better when drunk on its own.”

Nicholas adds, “You can’t pair fine foods with soda or even many beers, whereas tea is very much like wine. The terroir of a single estate gives a specific flavor profile.”

The chemistry of hard kombucha

Adam invested in [Anton-Parr AlcoLyzer](#) test equipment at the cost of € 25,000 for two-digit ABV accuracy. He secured a Dutch government license allowing him to sell alcoholic beverages legally. He pays the tax levied on alcohol sales, reaching 21% VAT if the ABV is above 1.2%. Continuous measurement is necessary as the precise ABV varies by batch. He provides accurate statements on his labels as a service to customers struggling with alcohol issues, pregnant women, or Muslims wanting to keep Halal.

He also offers measurement services to area homebrewers curious about the alcohol level of their brew.

Taproom and online sales

The LYS taproom is currently open on Saturdays and serves kombucha, fresh pastry, and kimchi. They also offer online sales.

The taproom is an ideal environment in which to educate customers. They might arrive with misconceptions about kombucha based on the experience of vinegary homebrew or overly sweet commercial brands. They often leave as kombucha connoisseurs with a new appreciation of the potential of finely crafted premium kombucha.

Plans

With Amsterdam reopening following repeated pandemic lockdowns, LYS has launched a [crowdfunding campaign](#) to finance a new taproom on a street with better foot traffic. The new facility will serve coffee and pastry for take-away in the mornings and offer a ‘deli style’ self-service fridge for takeout kombucha, sparkling wine, and sparkling sake.

Adam wants to experiment with single-estate teas sourced from the growing number of European plantations. He will first offer these on draft in the taproom to gather feedback and choose which to keep in his lineup. He also plans to experiment with elderflower, verbena, and berries from local gardens in a 50/50 tea/botanicals mix. 🌿