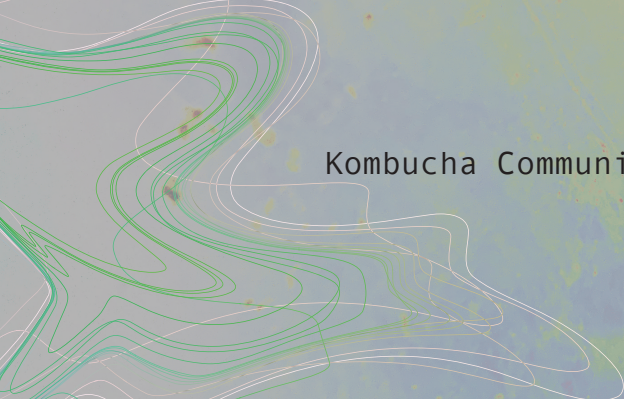


The background is an abstract, textured composition. It features a mix of colors: a deep blue at the top, transitioning into a vibrant green in the upper left, and a bright orange and yellow at the bottom left. The overall texture is grainy and organic, with some darker spots and streaks scattered throughout. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

INTERSPECIES COLLABORATION WITH KOMBUCHA

{the kombucha community guide to ritual and ceremony}



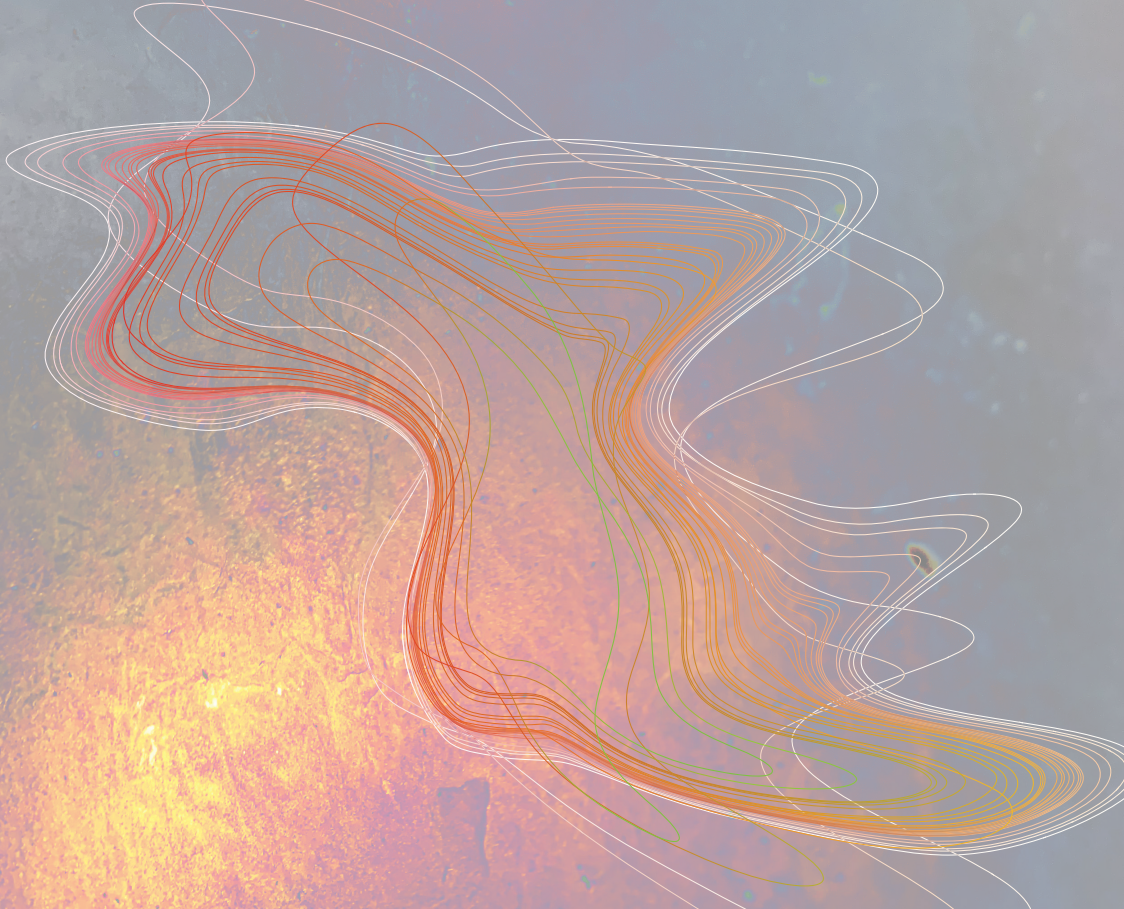
Kombucha Community

The kombucha community participates in daily individual rituals and seasonal collective ceremonies with SCOBY. SCOBY, meaning Symbiotic Culture Of Bacteria and Yeast, are the physical pellicles that create kombucha tea. SCOBY are also referred to as kombucha. These harmonious communities of microorganisms live in a mixture of sugared tea and vinegar (referred to as a starter mix), and through their metabolic processes, create a fermented tea beverage and biofilm, or pellicle. The older pellicle that is placed in the mix to start the fermentation process is called a "mother" and the pellicle it forms at the top of the liquid is called a "daughter." This biofilm is the same that can be seen floating in bottles of apple cider vinegar. The pellicle is edible and can also be collaborated with as a bioassembled material.

The kombucha community partakes in ritual and ceremony with kombucha to bring awareness to the agency of the self and the agency of the kombucha, connecting the individual to the collective. These rituals embody the notion of care in our interspecies collaborations. The practices of zooming in to the micro and zooming out to the macro while acknowledging their parallels to our existence represent pathways to collective healing. As a participating member of the community, you will: live, meditate, create with kombucha; provide for kombucha; consume, observe, and honor kombucha. These repeated acts become ritualized at both individual and collective levels through the forms of daily meditations and seasonal tea ceremonies.

As a new member of the community, you will be given a SCOBY by the welcoming team to begin your collaboration. The team will teach you how to prepare your kombucha altar at home with the appropriate tools and materials to make kombucha tea and grow kombucha pellicles. The kombucha altar is a space for the tea-providing container, a material-providing container, a SCOBY hotel, and a SCOBY cemetery. The team will show you how to feed and care for SCOBY, and how to observe the microorganisms with both empirical and scientific observation. The team will also show you the community's procedures of co-creation from tea to material, and the process of honoring dead SCOBY.

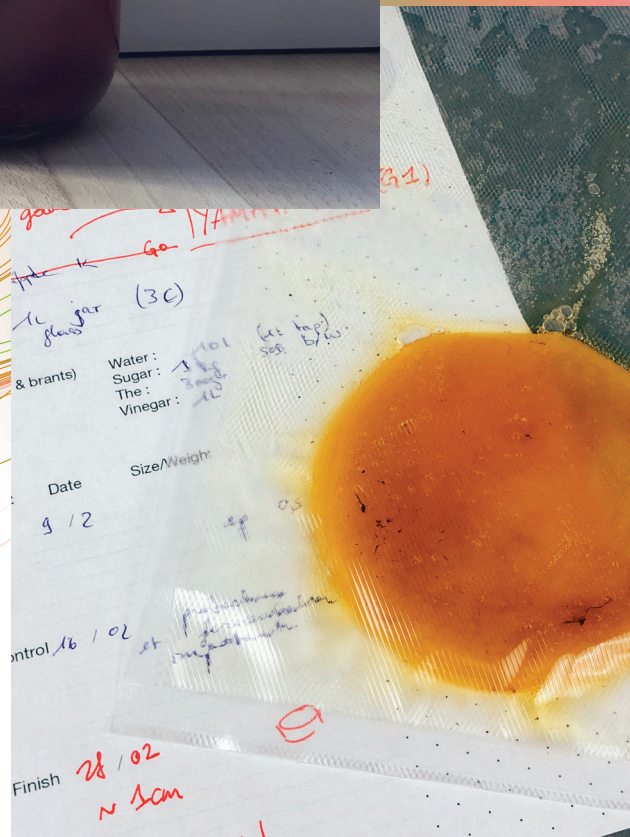
You will first learn to make kombucha tea. Once you understand the tea making process, you may begin the material creation process. Both the tea and material creation produce SCOBY daughters that may be eaten or collaborated with as a bioassembled material. After a few cycles of tea or material creation, the mothers will reach the end of their lifetimes. Through your observations, you will know when the mothers have ended their collaboration with you. The creation process will be taken over by the daughters and the mothers will move to the SCOBY cemetery, a container for the SCOBY to rest, to experience one day of meditation that will honor the life of the microorganisms before drying the pellicle for material uses. After this, you will learn to make a kombucha cup for the tea ceremony. Once you have learned and incorporated these processes into your life, you will be placed on the community roster to be chosen as a seasonal collective-starter-mix caretaker.



Daily Meditation

On a daily basis, each member of the community will take a minimum of 10 minutes out of their day to meditate with kombucha. The intention of this daily meditation is an active listening and an active becoming with kombucha, to make time and create space for the microorganisms and to give gratitude for their life and materiality. The welcoming team will provide you with a guided meditation to have a basic understanding of the collective intention before venturing into a self-guided meditation.

Alongside this daily meditation practice is a scientific practice of observation on color, smell, sugar levels, ambient temperature, humidity, new growth, and pH to promote consistent awareness of the subtlety of the organism and the "other." Every day, you will use your five senses to observe and to try to understand the kombucha. Once per week, you will use scientific instruments to mediate your observations. These observations will be recorded in shared community records to promote collective understanding of the health and life cycles of the various SCOBY strains throughout the community.



images courtesy of NGO design studio thr34d5

Kombucha Ceremony



During each equinox and solstice of every year, the members of the community gather to honor the life of the SCOBY they have collaborated with throughout the seasons. As part of the ritual, the members perform a kombucha tea ceremony with a dried kombucha leather cup to honor the body and the origin of the microorganisms. Before participating in this ceremony, each member will grow a pellicle and make their own kombucha cup. This cup is then brought to each seasonal gathering for the tea ceremony. As a new member of the community, you may attend your first seasonal ceremonies as an observer. You will actively participate in the ceremonies after you have made kombucha tea, grown a pellicle, and co-created a cup with kombucha through the rituals of meditation and scientific observation.

To begin the ceremony, members will gather in a circle around a container that has been filled with some of the collective-starter-mix. Kombucha tea that has been made by one of the newest members will be poured into each member's cup. Each member will then take a sip of the tea and pour the remaining liquid into the collective-starter-mix as an offering to the next generation of SCOBY. To complete the ceremony, the collective starter liquid will then be evenly separated and poured into individual containers that are given to each member to offer to the season's new generation of kombucha.

The background is a complex, abstract composition of colors and textures. It features a gradient from a deep, dark blue at the top to a bright, fiery orange and yellow at the bottom. The texture is grainy and layered, with some areas appearing more saturated and others more muted. There are small, dark specks and faint, irregular shapes scattered throughout, giving it a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a microscopic view of a liquid or a close-up of a mineral surface.

{the kombucha community}