

## Brewing Healthy Drinks

By John P. Berg

Brewing, a fermentation process, can produce beverages with excellent nutritional properties. The most common brewed beverage is, of course, beer, which has beneficial nutritional qualities for the most part. Unfortunately for nutrition, the ethyl alcohol also produced during the brewing process negates many of these nutritional benefits. But, not all brewing ends in beer. Non-alcoholic and highly nutritious drinks can also result from the brewing process. These types of drinks are typically referred to as alternative fermented beverages but can also be termed functional drinks (i.e. sports drinks, energy drinks, etc. . .).

Alternative fermented beverages can have impressive nutritional qualities. During the brewing process organic acids such as lactic acid and gluconic acid are produced. Minerals (calcium, magnesium, and potassium), phytochemicals, and dietary fiber may also be introduced from the raw materials used in brewing. Having all these nutritional elements in one drink can enhance their individual effects. For instance, organic acids can improve the “bioavailability” of minerals in the body.

Although alternative fermented beverages are typically sold in health food outlets, local and national breweries could produce them as alcoholic drink alternatives. These drinks could be marketed towards non-drinkers, designated drivers, and pregnant women as high-quality and desirable alternatives to beer without undermining overall brewery sales. The result: a win-win situation for breweries and customers.

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#### Reference

Tenge, C. and Geiger, E., (2001). Alternative Fermented Beverages – Functional Drinks. *Technical Quarterly*, 38(1), 33-35.