



Fermented Goods Are Having Their Moment

BY LUCY HAINES

THE PANDEMIC CHANGED THINGS for many businesses – often for the worse – but in the case of Garage Kombucha, it gets some of the credit for imagining it into existence.

Registered dietician Vera Baraz and her chemist husband, Daniel Calcines, had their careers and even a side business teaching Argentine dance. So when Covid put a pause on pursuing that passion, the busy pair found themselves with time on their hands.

“Daniel bought a 400-litre stainless steel fermenter and was experimenting with it in the garage,” recalls Vera, adding that the family was already familiar with making fermented foods – things like pickles, kefir, sauerkraut etc. “He started making kombucha (a slightly fizzy, tangy fermented tea drink), intending to just

give it away, but our kids said it was the best kombucha they’d ever tasted, and we should try selling it.”

That was 2022. Fast forward a few years, and Garage Kombucha (so named because of its origins in the family garage) is a business on the rise, with Baraz, Calcines, and their adult children Bianca and Emilio, (who’ve both studied business at the post-secondary level) all part of the company. That core team, plus a few employees helping in the brewery or with restocking retail shelves and at markets, are onboard to showcase the benefits of this fermented beverage. And, if you’ve been up on health and wellness news, fermented food and beverages are having their moment.

“This has taken over my life,” admits Baraz, adding though she loves her hospital job, Garage Kombucha has demanded

that attention. “We love what we do, so it doesn’t feel like work. But it’s become a seven day a week commitment.” The level of busy-ness may also have to do with the company’s ever-increasing lineup of fermented foods, which now includes kimchi, carrot slaw, sauerkraut, mustard, and apple cider vinegar, in addition to several flavours of kombucha.

Regular Bountiful market customer Dr. Miranda Pilipchuk describes her own digestive health needs as well served by dietician Baraz and chemist Calcines as, “The exact, perfect combination of people to be making kombucha. Their expertise is outstanding. I’ve been consistently impressed by how well Garage balances smoothness and fizz, and their flavours are delicious without being overpowering or overly sweet.”