

Sorgho looks to modernise *umqombothi* with Umoja Beer Powder

Sorghum malt manufacturer Sorgho intends on modernising the process of making *umqombothi*, or home-brewed beer, with its Umoja Beer Powder.



Every family has their way of making it, with secrets, tips and specialities passed down from generation to generation. But regardless of who oversees the brew, *umqombothi* is universally appreciated in South Africa.

More than just beer

It's a way of celebrating the return of younger generations after initiation ceremonies and plays a central role in *amadlozi* – the contacting of the ancestors. And then, of course, it's also a vital part of any important community event, including weddings, funerals and imbizos.

“*Umqombothi* plays a huge role in African spiritual life,” says Maanda Mphaphuli, sales executive at Sorgho. “The preparation of the beer is as important, culturally, as the drinking of it. Because our company supplies some of the key ingredients, we’ve been at the heart of this uniquely South African experience for over 26 years.”

Sorgho has manufactured and supplied sorghum malt to the local food and beverages industry since 1993. One of only two industrial maltings companies in the country, with the launch of Umoja Beer Powder, Sorgho brings innovation to the age-old tradition of African beer brewing, a product which dramatically reduces the time it takes to produce *umqombothi*.

Umqombothi in 24 hours

“Our lives are always changing,” says Mphaphuli. “Obviously, in an ideal, traditional-world families love to go through the full *umqombothi* process, and to enjoy it over several days. Umoja Sorghum Malt has always been at the heart of this, and still will be.

“But the reality for many people who live in cities and have demanding lives and careers is that they are only able to gather over short periods, like weekends. Time is especially precious when family members live in different parts of the country and must travel long distances. In these situations, Umoja Beer Powder allows the brewing process to happen in 24 hours, which can be a real blessing.”

Using traditional methods, *umqombothi* preparation takes several days and requires repeat bouts of cooking and long periods of rest, as well as the addition of ingredients such as sorghum malt, mielie meal and yeast. Umoja Beer Powder cuts these out completely. The powder is simply mixed with tap water and left for 24 hours, without any other steps required.

“Brewers will still use all their traditional family recipes and mixes to get the beer how it should be for them,” says Mphaphuli.

“Using the beer powder just allows the brewer to get right into the important parts, rather than being forced into spending many hours in the build-up. For people facing time challenges, it means a vital cultural experience can still play a big role in their life.”

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