



## NUTRITION CONNECTION

# BENEFICIAL BEVERAGES

BY KRISTIN KLINEFELTER, MS, RDN, LDN

**AS YOU ARE SITTING DOWN TO READ THIS ARTICLE,** do you have your favorite beverage in hand? If not, please go grab one, or at least bring your favorite beverage to mind. Now that you have your beverage in hand or mind, take a moment to think about why it is your personal favorite. Do you simply like the flavor and temperature? Do you enjoy the feeling of alertness or “energy” it provides? Does it contribute to your daily micro or macronutrients needs to sustain your health? You might even answer “because if I don’t drink this, I will get a headache.”

Now, think about the hydration services you offer your clients daily. You have calculated each person’s fluid needs and have policies and procedures in place for hydration. Your team provides this vital service for whoever your customer is. Have you ever thought of the beverages you serve providing benefits beyond hydration? There are benefits that beverages can supply to improve nutrition as well as the bottom line in your operation.

### WHAT IS A BENEFICIAL BEVERAGE?

A functional or beneficial beverage provides nutritional, flavor, or even psychological benefits beyond simple hydration. Protein, antioxidants, probiotics, vitamins, and minerals are a few of the additions to beverages for nutritional benefits.

### THE KEY PLAYERS

Research finds that the antioxidants in **coffee** (in moderation, about 200 mg daily) reduce our risk of certain cancers, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer’s, and other chronic diseases. The key word here is *moderation*, as there are negative effects of excess caffeine consumption such as lack of mental focus, high blood pressure, rapid heart rate, and in extreme cases, death. Remember that caffeine is the only legal addictive substance available for all people to purchase and consume in the United

States. According to Zippia, the coffee industry is worth \$90 billion in the U.S. Many commercial coffee companies are now venturing into “functional coffee” drinks, such as protein coffee. Chances are, coffee is one of the four main beverages you serve your clients daily (water, milk, juice, and coffee are included on most menus). Don’t worry, decaffeinated coffee still contains beneficial antioxidants.

Other key beverages with benefits include **tea** for its anti-inflammatory effect, **milk** for calcium, phosphorus and protein, **sports drinks** for electrolytes, and commercial **protein fortified or enriched beverages**.

### Protein Beverages

One can argue that health care was the trendsetter for the now popular protein drink trend. For several decades, the healthcare industry has used nutritional supplements in the form of beverages to optimize health outcomes such as weight gain, skin healing, and chronic disease management. Your department may have supplements as a budget line item, or they may belong to a different department, such as nursing. Regardless, you are fully aware of the cost of commercial supplements and have most likely explored a ‘food first’ or homemade supplement program for your at-risk clients.

Some operators and managers choose to make their supplements in-house, providing a food cost savings. This is a calculated decision which, of course, means you need to have enough labor for preparation. If you have not done so, conduct a Make versus Buy cost and taste analysis for liquid supplements in your operation. The CDM, CFPP Practice Standard for Calculating Food Costs worksheet may be helpful as you analyze your supplement costs (link in References section).



## Probiotic Beverages

Probiotic beverages provide healthy bacteria for digestion, and are especially helpful for individuals with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and overgrowth of yeast. Even though it has been known that we have healthy bacteria in our gastrointestinal tract to aid in proper digestion and absorption, more recent studies have examined the gut microbiome and its impact on our health. Examples of beverages with probiotics include kombucha, kefir, and other drinks with added probiotics. **Kombucha** is a fermented tea that comes in a variety of flavors in the retail marketplace. **Kefir** can be described as drinkable yogurt. Most commercial kefir products would test at a level 2 (mildly thick) or 3 (moderately thick) on the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Flow Test. Kefir comes in a variety of flavors and can be consumed by sipping



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## Enhanced and Infused Waters

Hydration stations are an absolute must in your operation. With the exception of clients who require fluid restrictions or consistency modifications, all clients should have access to hydration 24 hours a day. Hydration stations can also be an inexpensive way to promote employee wellness and boost morale. Enhanced waters are a fresh way to serve hydration and nutrition to your clients. “Enhanced” can be another word for fortified, which means vitamins or minerals have been added to a food or beverage that were not originally in the item. A beverage can also be enhanced with flavor, such as in infused water. Commercial grade water infusion dispensers are available and can be a colorful, nutritious way to encourage hydration. Change up the flavor every day and label your

beverages with fun names such as “Summer Squeeze” or “Marvelous Mint” (see infographic for more ideas).

If you are struggling with labor in your department, think outside of the kitchen to see if someone in a different department can be your hydration champion by keeping the area stocked and free of spills. Perhaps your hydration station is at the main entrance and you can have the receptionist keep their eyes on it, or your activities director can coordinate the flavor menu and station set-up. You also can procure enhanced bottled beverages available for purchase in break rooms or on snack carts.

This is a good time to mention the barriers to proper hydration in certain populations. Medications and aging can reduce an older adult’s sense of thirst. They may also intentionally restrict their fluid intake due to urinary frequency or incontinence, especially late in the day. By promoting hydration in a fun, colorful way, we can reduce some of these barriers.

### Energy Drinks

Energy drink sales have boomed to \$53 billion in 2022 (Investopedia). If we go back to the basics of nutrition, remember that energy is derived from the three energy-yielding macronutrients (carbohydrates, protein, fat) and not from caffeine, stimulants, or B-vitamins. Many energy drinks contain B vitamins; however, they also can contain stimulants, caffeine, sugar, and other non-regulated ingredients. Using the aforementioned definition of beneficial beverages, energy drinks may provide psychological benefit, but should not be categorized as a nutritionally-beneficial beverage. Many young athletes have admitted that they are “addicted” to energy drinks and it is purely superstitious to include them in their pre-game routine. Risks of overconsuming energy drinks include poor energy (ironically), rapid heart rate, dehydration, and lack of mental focus.

### CHEERS TO HAPPY HOUR!

Beneficial beverages can be included during “Happy Hour.” Foodservice professionals excel at collaborating with activities departments, and special events for residents that include nutritional beverages can be an excellent way to nourish and hydrate. Away with med pass as the method to provide your clients with their **prescription supplements**. Call it Happy Hour and you have now made that person’s day! Offering someone’s supplement while they are socializing can be a positive way to reduce stigma and the institutional feel of prescribed supplements. The team member (aka “bartender”) that serves the supplement

can pour the product into a clear glass with a fun straw to make it look like a smoothie at an upscale coffee shop. For calorie counts, using a Mason jar with lines or an 8-oz glass will work just as well, if not better. If you remove the supplement from its original container, make sure this is noted in your policy and procedure and pour the beverage out at the point of consumption, paying special attention to HIPAA requirements and food safety principles.

Speaking of bartending, **alcohol**—in moderation—is an appetite stimulant for clients who have a poor

appetite. Here is our reminder that not all adults should or can drink alcohol, especially if they have contraindications with medications or disease states. It is not advised to serve alcohol as part of the menu or activities in health care, but some facilities offer locked cabinets and areas for their clients to enjoy an alcoholic beverage. Of course, you must have a policy and procedure in place if your clients are able to purchase their own alcohol and consume it on site. Alcohol policies in long-term care facilities should consider health, human rights, and legal guidelines and laws. Always follow your local and state guidelines and obtain necessary licenses and insurance if alcohol is served in your facility.

**Smoothies**—full of fruit, veggies, and protein—may be a hit as well. School programs can offer “Celebration Smoothies” to replace sugary treats for birthdays. The program can be run by Nutrition Services or even a Parent Teacher Organization as a revenue builder. The long-term care population is not the demographic that spends \$10+ daily on a fancy beverage at the coffee shop on the corner, but

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## HYDRATION STATION WINNERS

**INFUSED WATER  
FRESH HYDRATION**

- Summer Squeeze (Strawberries, Lemon, Mint)
- Marvelous Mint (Mint, Cucumber)
- Apple of My Eye (Apple, Cantaloupe, Cilantro)
- Citrus Kiss (Grapefruit, Orange, Lime)
- Hula Fresh (Pineapple, Mango)

NUTRIENT/ CHEMICAL	DAILY VALUE	NOTES
<b>Caffeine</b>	<b>FDA</b> "Safe amount" 400 mg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caffeine is not a nutrient; it is a chemical or drug.</li> <li>• 8 oz. of coffee has ~95 mg of caffeine.</li> <li>• Some energy drinks have 200+ mg of caffeine.</li> </ul>
<b>Calcium</b>	<b>RDA</b> Adults: 1,000 mg >70 or post-menopausal: 1,200 mg	1 cup of milk = 300 mg calcium
<b>Protein</b>	<b>ANFP (2)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy adult: 0.8 g/kg</li> <li>• Malnourished client: 1.2-1.5 g/kg</li> <li>• Following surgery: 1.0-2.0 g/kg</li> <li>• Following trauma, severe burn, or multiple fractures: 2.0 g/kg</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protein needs for individuals vary greatly.</li> <li>• Beverages can be a healthy way to increase protein consumption.</li> </ul>
<b>Sugar</b>	<b>American Heart Association (1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men &lt;36 grams or 9 tsp daily</li> <li>• Women &amp; Children &lt;25 grams or 6 tsp daily</li> </ul>	Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are the leading source of added sugars in the American diet. (AHA & CDC)
<b>Pre/Probiotics</b>	No guidelines	Benefits gastrointestinal health.
<b>Water</b>	<b>ANFP (2)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average Adults: 30 mL/kg</li> <li>• Adults with Infection or Draining Wounds: 35 mL/kg</li> <li>• Adults with CHF or Renal Disease: 25 mL/kg</li> </ul>	Pouring water out of infused water containers not only adds visual interest to your hydration station, it provides flavor without adding sugars or syrups.





REFERENCES

Scan QR code to view the list of resources for this article.

their grandkids are! Wouldn't it be fun to provide the feel of a cozy cafe for our clients to spend time with friends and family? Coffee nooks, hydration stations, and smoothie stands can be created out of space and equipment that you already have. By

thinking "outside of the med cart" you can provide beverage options in a dignified way to your clients. You may also increase retail sales by offering a la carte beverage options and on-site coffee bars for employees and the public.

SUMMING IT UP

Your menu drives many decisions in your department. Taking a new, fresh look at your menu and retail spaces to include beneficial beverages can be a fun way to nourish and engage your clients. Cheers!



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Kristin Klinefelter has been practicing in the nutrition and foodservice field since 1998. One of her favorite nicknames is "Smoothie Lady," which the students named her after she started a celebration smoothie program at a local elementary school. She has found that certain populations appreciate the dramatic nature of the expression "Hydrate or Diedrate" (coined by a popular hair designer), when discussing proper hydration and beverages with benefits.



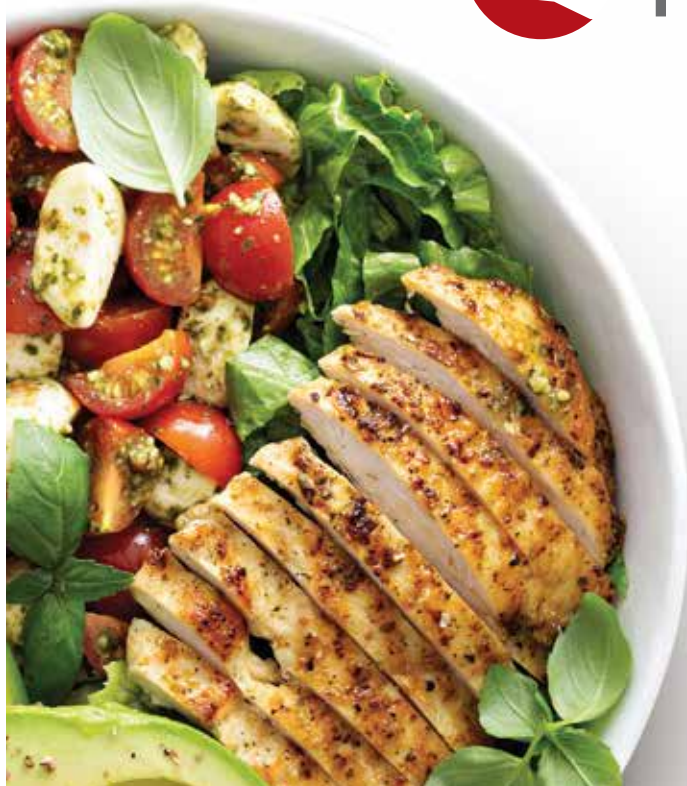
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## CE QUESTIONS | NUTRITION CONNECTION



This Level I article assumes that the reader has introductory knowledge of the topic. The desired outcome is to ensure a basic understanding and explanation of the concepts of the subject matter and recalling of related facts.

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- The benefits of consuming coffee include:
  - The psychological boost of consuming a flavorful, warm beverage
  - The antioxidant impact on disease prevention
  - Both A and B
- The total daily added sugar limit suggested by the American Heart Association is:
  - 36 grams for men and 25 grams for women and children
  - 50 grams for men and 40 grams for women and children
  - 65 grams for men and 55 grams for women and children
- What is an option to provide additional protein and calories without increasing your prescription supplement spending?
  - Look for lower cost protein powders or food products to add to your current beverage selections
  - Conduct a Make versus Buy study for supplements
  - Both A and B
- The minimal nutrition benefit from energy drinks do not outweigh the potential harmful effects.
  - True
  - False
- Which is a barrier for proper hydration in the older adult population?
  - They don't enjoy water, coffee, or milk
  - They have a reduced sense of thirst
  - Their doctors tell them not to drink too many fluids
- Which probiotic beverage will be appropriate for a client requiring Level 2 liquids on the IDDSI framework?
  - Kombucha
  - Kefir
  - Probiotic soda
- Who can you collaborate with to develop a more robust beverage program?
  - Your supplier
  - Activities department
  - Both A and B



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