

SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESS JOURNAL

A few years ago she made deliveries from her car. This week, a commercial for her company aired during the NBA Finals

Jun 8, 2023, 1:46pm EDT



Radiate Kombucha

Radiate Kombucha founder Susan Cartiglia-Aran

Susan Cartiglia-Aran began brewing kombucha long before she ever thought about becoming an entrepreneur.

As a teenager, she would make batches of the fermented tea beverage in her parents' kitchen — and they weren't always fans.

"They thought it looked gross," Cartiglia-Aran said.

She kept brewing the drink as a hobby, even as she pursued a career as a nutritionist and community health educator. Then, in 2016, she opened Radiate Apothecary, a market that took leftover produce from local farmers and used it to make essential oils, beauty products

and more. As an afterthought, she sold bottles of kombucha – and customers loved it. Within a week, she had 50 wholesale orders for the tart and bubbly beverage.

"The kombucha took on a life of its own," Cartiglia-Aran said.

Seven years later, her business Radiate Kombucha has a 3,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Allapattah, where it brews and cans fruit-infused flavors of its speciality drink. It reached a whole new audience this week after a [30-second commercial](#) for the brand aired during Game 3 of the NBA Finals between the Miami Heat and Denver Nuggets on June 7.

Cartiglia-Aran got the opportunity to put Radiate Kombucha in front of an estimated 500,000 viewers after winning a contest from [.Online Domains](#) designed to support female entrepreneurs in South Florida. She used it as a vehicle to launch the brand's direct-to-consumer business, which enables kombucha fans to have orders delivered right to their door. The beverage is also available at nine Whole Foods stores in Miami-Dade County.

Radiate Kombucha's beverages are made from organic tea and organic, locally sourced vegan cane sugar placed together in a glass vessel. A colony of bacteria and yeast are then added to the mixture to consume the sugar. During the fermentation process, sugar is transformed into probiotics that can help keep the gut healthy.

Sustainability is at the core of the company's mission, one of the reasons it is committed to partnering with Florida farmers and family businesses.

"It's so important to use what we have right here instead of shipping items across the world," Cartiglia-Aran said. "Let's use what we have in our backyard."

A few years ago, Radiate Kombucha switched from glass bottles to cans after Cartiglia-Aran learned that most glass in the area doesn't end up getting recycled.

While the company has had a string of successes, it isn't always easy. Selling a refrigerated, perishable beverage can be intimidating, especially in a market where the biggest competitors are Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Cartiglia-Aran is also manning the self-funded business while raising three children. In the early days she would personally make wholesale deliveries in a Volkswagen, often with a toddler in the carseat.

But the opportunity to introduce kombucha to a new audience — and, potentially, make customers more conscious of their own health and lifestyle choices — still drives her.

"I want to bridge the gap and reach those consumers who don't usually think of themselves as health food people," she said.

Sign up [here](#) for the Business Journal's free morning and afternoon daily newsletters to receive the latest business news impacting South Florida. For more business intelligence, follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



Ashley Portero
Senior Reporter - *South Florida Business Journal*