

Coca-Cola's secret recipe revealed?

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

ingredient	intrigued	recipe	sweetener	widow
myth	formula	caffeine	flavouring	fizzy

1. A _____ is a set of instructions for preparing a particular type of food or drink. (title)
2. _____ drinks contain bubbles of gas. (para 1)
3. A _____ is something added to a food or drink to give it a particular taste. (para 1)
4. A _____ is a list of the exact amounts of the ingredients needed for making something. (para 3)
5. If you feel _____, you are very interested in something and want to know more about it. (para 4)
6. A _____ is a woman whose husband has died and who has not married again. (para 4)
7. An _____ is one of the substances that are combined to make something, especially food or drink. (para 3)
8. _____ is a substance in coffee and tea that makes you feel awake. (para 5)
9. A _____ is something that people wrongly believe to be true. (para 6)
10. A _____ is a substance added to food or drink instead of sugar. (para 6)

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible.

1. How many flavourings are added to make Coca-Cola?
2. When was Coca-Cola first made?
3. Where is the original recipe for Coca-Cola supposedly kept?
4. Who first created Coca-Cola?
5. When was cocaine removed from Coca-Cola?
6. When was sugar removed from the drink?

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Coca-Cola secret recipe revealed? It's the real thing, says radio host

Ed Pilkington in New York
16 February, 2011

- 1 For almost 125 years, the recipe for Coca-Cola has been a secret and this has been a very successful marketing strategy for the company. According to the story, the fizzy drink's famous '7X' flavourings have remained unchanged since they were first blended in 1886. Today, only two Coke executives know the recipe, neither of whom can travel on the same plane in case the secret dies with them.
- 2 Now, one of America's most famous radio broadcasters says he has discovered the Coke secret. Ira Glass, presenter of the programme *This American Life*, says he has found a copy of the recipe. The original is still supposedly kept in a bank in Atlanta, in a burglar-proof room.
- 3 The formula was created by John Pemberton, an Atlanta chemist who made cough medicines and other drinks in his spare time. In 1887, he sold the recipe to a businessman who immediately placed it in the Atlanta bank for safekeeping.
- 4 Glass came across a recipe that he believes is the secret formula in a back issue of Pemberton's local paper, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, while he was researching an entirely different story. On an inside page of the 8 February 1979 edition, he found an article that claimed to have discovered the secret 7X formula. The article was based on information found in an old notebook that belonged to Pemberton's best friend, RR Evans. Glass was intrigued and, after some investigation, found that the notebook had been passed from generation to generation until it reached a chemist in Georgia called Everett Beal, whose widow still has it.
- 5 The rediscovered recipe includes the following ingredients: extract of coca leaves, caffeine, plenty of sugar, lime juice, vanilla and caramel. The all-important 7X flavourings are added into that syrup: alcohol and six oils – orange, lemon, nutmeg, coriander, neroli and cinnamon. The formula is very similar to the recipe worked out by Mark Pendergrast who wrote a history of Coca-Cola in 1993.
- 6 Coke's secret recipe is actually partly a myth. The recipe has, in fact, changed substantially over time. Cocaine, a legal drug in Pemberton's time, was removed from the drink in 1904. Extract of coca leaves is still used but only after the cocaine has been removed. In 1980, the company largely replaced sugar with a cheaper sweetener that is often found in American food and drink. Passionate Coke fans were not impressed by this change.
- 7 Despite these controversies, one element has remained constant over time: Coke's commitment to keeping its own secret. People have been talking about the secret recipe for more than a century and this has been good for business.
- 8 The company has reacted to the *This American Life* story in a way that has been typical of its commercial strategy since the 19th century. "Many people have tried to discover our secret formula but they've been unsuccessful," Coca-Cola's Kerry Tressler said.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the information in the article?

1. The ingredients of Coca-Cola haven't changed since 1886.
2. Coca-Cola has never contained cocaine.
3. Ira Glass was researching a story about Coca-Cola when he found the recipe.
4. According to the story, only two Coca-Cola executives know the secret recipe.
5. The two Coca-Cola executives are not allowed to travel together on the same plane.
6. Passionate Coke fans prefer sweetener to sugar.

4 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a verb meaning *to mix different ingredients together* (para 1)
2. a two-word adjective meaning *protected from theft* (para 2)
3. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *find by chance* (para 4)
4. a two-word noun meaning *an old copy of a magazine or newspaper* (para 4)
5. an adverb meaning *completely or in every way* (para 4)
6. an adverb meaning *by a large amount or degree* (para 6)
7. a noun meaning *a disagreement about a moral issue that a lot of people have strong feelings about* (para 7)
8. a noun meaning *a promise or a determination to do something* (para 7)

5 Words followed by prepositions

Complete the phrases from the text using prepositions.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. according _____ | 4. from generation _____ generation |
| 2. based _____ | 5. similar _____ |
| 3. belong _____ | 6. replace _____ |

6 Two-word expressions

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. marketing | a. medicine |
| 2. secret | b. time |
| 3. fizzy | c. formula |
| 4. spare | d. proof |
| 5. cough | e. drink |
| 6. burglar- | f. strategy |

7 Discussion

Do you believe the stories about Coca-Cola? Why? Why not? Why do you think it has been an important part of Coca-Cola's marketing strategy to keep the recipe a secret?

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KEY

1 Key words

1. recipe
2. fizzy
3. flavouring
4. formula
5. intrigued
6. widow
7. ingredient
8. caffeine
9. myth
10. sweetener

2 Find the information

1. seven
2. 1886
3. in a bank in Atlanta
4. John Pemberton
5. 1904
6. 1980

3 Comprehension check

1. F
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. T
6. F

4 Find the word

1. blend
2. burglar-proof
3. come across
4. back issue
5. entirely
6. substantially
7. controversy
8. commitment

5 Words followed by prepositions

1. to
2. on
3. to
4. to
5. to
6. with

6 Two-word expressions

1. f
2. c
3. e
4. b
5. a
6. d