

Coca-Cola's secret recipe revealed?

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

plays	deduce	vault	intrigued	mystique	purists
ubiquitous	unease	disdain	formula	sweetener	

- _____ are ways of tricking or confusing others in order to gain an advantage or make them do what you want.
- A _____ is a strongly protected room in a bank where money, gold, etc., is kept.
- A _____ is a list of the exact amounts of the ingredients needed for making something.
- If you feel _____, you are very interested in something and want to know more about it.
- If you _____ something, you know something as a result of considering the information or evidence that you have.
- _____ is an attractive quality that someone or something has because they seem mysterious and special in an exciting way.
- _____ is a feeling of being nervous, uncomfortable or unhappy about a situation.
- _____ is a substance added to food or drink instead of sugar.
- If something is _____, it can be found everywhere.
- _____ are people who want others to be correct and follow rules carefully.
- If you express _____, you show that someone or something is not important and does not deserve respect.

2 What do you know?

Decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F). Then check your answers by reading the text.

- Coca-Cola was first made in the eighteenth century.
- Coca-Cola was first made in California.
- Coca-Cola was created by John Pemberton, a chemist.
- The original recipe for Coca-Cola is held in a bank vault.
- Coca-Cola has never contained cocaine.
- Coca-Cola does not contain sugar.

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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 secrecy surrounding the recipe for Coca-Cola has been one of the world's great marketing ploys. As the story goes, the fizzy drink's famous "Merchandise 7X" flavourings have remained unchanged since they were concocted in 1886. Today, the recipe is entrusted only to two Coke executives, neither of whom can travel on the same plane for fear the secret goes down with them.
- 2 Now, one of America's most celebrated radio broadcasters claims to have discovered the Coke secret. Ira Glass, presenter of the public radio institution *This American Life*, says he has tracked down a copy of the recipe, the original of which is still supposedly held in a burglar-proof vault at the Sun Trust Bank in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 3 The formula was created by John Pemberton, an Atlanta chemist and former Confederate army officer who crafted cough medicines and other concoctions in his spare time. In 1887, he sold the recipe to a businessman, Asa Griggs, who immediately placed it for safekeeping in the then Georgia Trust Bank.
- 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. Tucked away on an inside page of the 8 February 1979 edition, he stumbled on an article that claimed to have uncovered the closely guarded 7X formula.
- 5 The column was based on information found in an old leather-bound notebook that belonged to Pemberton's best friend and fellow Atlanta chemist, RR Evans. Glass was intrigued and, after some digging, found that the notebook had been handed down the generations until it reached a chemist in Georgia called Everett Beal, whose widow still possesses it.
- 6 The rediscovered recipe includes extract of coca leaves, caffeine, plenty of sugar (it specifies 30 unidentified units thought to be pounds), lime juice, vanilla and caramel. Into that syrup, the all-important 7X flavourings are added: alcohol and six oils – orange, lemon, nutmeg, coriander, neroli and cinnamon. The formula is strikingly similar to the recipe deduced by Mark Pendergrast who wrote a history of the drink in 1993 called *For God, Country & Coca-Cola*.
- 7 Coke's secret recipe is, in fact, part mythology. Contrary to the mystique surrounding it, the soda has changed substantially over time. Cocaine, a legal stimulant in Pemberton's day, was removed from the drink in 1904 after mounting public unease about the drug. Extract of coca leaves is still used but only after the cocaine has been removed.
- 8 In 1980, the company replaced sugar, squeezed from beet and cane, with the cheaper high-fructose corn sweetener that has become ubiquitous in American food and drink. Coke purists were not impressed.
- 9 Despite such occasional controversies, one element has remained constant: Coke's commitment to keeping its own secret. Speculation about the recipe has been a popular talking point for more than a century, proving good for business. True to form, the company has treated the *This American Life* story with the disdain that has marked its commercial strategy since the 19th century.
- 10 "Many third parties have tried to crack our secret formula. Try as they might, they've been unsuccessful," Coca-Cola's Kerry Tressler said.

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

1. What is the 'story' about the Coca-Cola recipe?
 - a. that only one copy of the recipe exists
 - b. that the flavourings were concocted as part of a marketing ploy
 - c. that only two Coca-Cola executives know the secret recipe
2. How many flavourings does Coca-Cola have?
 - a. seven
 - b. thirty
 - c. thirty-seven
3. Why is the idea of a secret recipe for Coca-Cola described as a myth?
 - a. because more than two executives know the recipe
 - b. because a radio broadcaster has managed to find a copy of the recipe
 - c. because the ingredients have changed considerably over time
4. What element of Coca-Cola has remained constant?
 - a. the use of cocaine as an ingredient
 - b. Coca-Cola's commitment to keeping its own secret
 - c. the use of a commercial strategy

4 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a verb meaning *to produce something unusual by mixing things in a new way, especially a drink or a meal* (para 1)
2. a two-word adjective meaning *protected from theft* (para 2)
3. a two-word noun meaning *an old copy of a magazine or newspaper* (para 4)
4. a verb meaning *to try and find out information about someone or something, especially when they do not want you to* (para 5)
5. an adverb meaning *in a way that attracts your interest or attention because of some unusual feature* (para 6)
6. a two-word noun meaning *something interesting that people are likely to want to discuss* (para 9)
7. a three-word expression used for saying that *someone is doing exactly what you expected because this is what they usually do* (para 9)
8. a four-word expression used for saying that *someone is making a very great effort but still cannot do or achieve something* (para 10)

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5 Phrasal verbs

Match the phrasal verbs from the text with their meanings on the right. Some of the phrasal verbs could have more than one meaning.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. track down | a. pass knowledge or skills on from generation to generation |
| 2. come across | b. fall to the ground |
| 3. tuck away | c. find by chance |
| 4. stumble (up)on | d. find after a long search |
| 5. hand down | e. find something or meet someone by complete accident |
| 6. go down | f. put something in a place where it is not easy to see or find |

6 Word-building

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

- A great deal of _____ surrounds the recipe for Coca-Cola. [SECRET]
- The recipe is _____ to just two Coca-Cola executives, according to the story. [TRUST]
- The original recipe is _____ held in a bank vault in Atlanta. [SUPPOSE]
- The recipe has changed _____ over time. [SUBSTANTIAL]
- The two recipes are _____ similar. [STRIKE]
- The recipe specifies 30 _____ units of weight. [IDENTIFY]

7 Discussion

Do you think the secrecy surrounding the recipe for Coca-Cola is a good marketing strategy? Why? Why not?

Did you find anything surprising in the article?

Why do you think Coca-Cola has responded to Ira Glass's supposed discovery with such disdain? Do you think he has found the original recipe? Explain your answers.

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KEY

1 Key words

1. ploys
2. vault
3. formula
4. intrigued
5. deduce
6. mystique
7. unease
8. sweetener
9. ubiquitous
10. purists
11. disdain

2 What do you know?

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

3 Comprehension check

1. c
2. a
3. c
4. b

4 Find the word

1. concoct
2. burglar-proof
3. back issue
4. dig
5. strikingly
6. talking point
7. true to form
8. try as they might

5 Phrasal verbs

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

6 Word-building

1. secrecy
2. entrusted
3. supposedly
4. substantially
5. strikingly
6. unidentified