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'We are gluttons for punishment. We're risk-takers and we don't rest easy,' says entrepreneur Feargal Harrington

'THIS IS ALL ABOUT BEING INSTAGRAMMABLE, IT'S ABOUT GEN-Z TAKING PHOTOS' – DATING AGENCY BOSS ON NEW ALCOHOL VENTURE, KOMBEARA

DRINKS

SEAN POLLOCK

The husband-and-wife team behind face-to face dating agency, Intro Matchmaking, are planning to raise €600,000 for their new alcoholic kombucha brand.

Feargal Harrington and Rena Maycock came up with the idea for Kombeara several years ago, partnering with kombucha brewer Ding Prud'homme, and founder of Beara Distillery, John Power.

The "hard kombucha" is already being brewed in Ballingeary, Co Cork, with Supervalu and Centra owner Musgrave set to list the brand.

Maycock is well-known in the technology space, having founded child-protection software firm Chirp.

Harrington said alcoholic kombucha was a growing trend in California that he hopes will kick off in Ireland.

He admitted alcohol was a big shift from the technology and dating services industries both have built their careers in.

"It was bizarre," he said. "We are gluttons for punishment, we are risk takers and we don't rest easy. We like a challenge.

"It was just too screamingly obvious an opportunity to pass up."

Harrington hopes the 4.2pc alcohol Kombeara can appeal to multinational tech companies based here and their young staff.

"This is all about being Instagrammable," he added. "This all about the Gen-Zs going up on the rooftop of Salesforce and taking a few pictures of Kombeara."

Investment is also on Kombeara's radar.

He has bootstrapped the business for the last three years.

Kombeara is in the middle of the Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme (EISS) looking to raise around €600,000 for a new canning line at its Co Cork brewery, and for marketing and breaking into foreign markets.

It has secured €100,000 in its first tranche.

Kombeara will be launched in multiple flavours, including grapefruit, blood orange and yuzu, mango and passionfruit, and Sicilian lemon and blueberry.

It has listings with the Carry Out off-licences and Mitchell and Son in Glasthule in south Dublin.

The recent listing with Musgrave was also a huge opportunity, Harrington said. But it is only half the battle.

"Yes, it is in the warehouse, but Johnny down in Bantry needs to put the order in for us to be on the shelves," he said.

"We have hired a sales rep to try and get it listed at stores as quickly as possible".