

SENTIA Spirits and GABA Labs Advance Functional Alcohol Alternatives Through Neuroscience Research

Inside the science shaping Functional Alcohol Alternatives: SENTIA Spirits and GABA Labs Explore Brain, Gut, and Receptor-level effects.

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As the global low-and-no alcohol market continues its exponential growth, a team of scientists behind [SENTIA Spirits](#) and its research engine [GABA Labs](#) is redefining what functional drinks can be—and do.

Their approach goes far beyond “better-for-you” claims or botanical blends. Through a series of cutting-edge studies with UK universities, GABA Labs is generating real scientific data on how functional compounds impact the brain and body—laying the groundwork for a future where alcohol’s social and psychological effects can be safely replicated, without the ethanol.

The research effort spans three core experiments, all of which have shown promising results.

In partnership with the University of Exeter, researchers tested whether SENTIA—a non-alcoholic functional spirit designed to modulate the brain’s GABA system—produces brain activity patterns similar to alcohol, without intoxication.

EEG scans revealed that SENTIA increases activity in the alpha band, a rhythm associated with calm, sociability, and relaxation—without the global suppression of brain function linked to alcohol. Unlike alcohol, SENTIA showed changes correlated with reduced anxiety, not euphoria or impairment.



At the University of Portsmouth, GABA Labs scientists are using frog oocytes (unfertilised frog eggs) to express human GABA-A receptors—the same receptors that alcohol target to create calming, trust-enhancing effects. By injecting these eggs with custom human RNA, researchers create living receptors outside the body, then bathe them in SENTIA products and the lab's upcoming molecule, Alcarelle, to observe their real-time effect at a molecular level.

"This is the kind of research that sets us apart," says Professor David Nutt, Chief Scientific Officer at SENTIA and GABA Labs. "We're building working models of the brain's social chemistry to understand how our formulations interact with the GABA system. No other drinks company is supporting this kind of research."



A third study in collaboration with the Sussex University and the University of Portsmouth is exploring how SENTIA products and Alcarelle affect gut motility—the movements that drive digestion and impact everything from mood to immune function. This taps into the growing field of gut-brain science, where GABA plays a pivotal role from immune function to mental health.

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This isn't just wellness marketing, It's neuroscience innovation designed to solve one of the oldest social dilemmas: how to feel comfortable, calm, and connected, without compromising our health.”

Professor David Nutt

Though results are yet to be published, early findings suggest these compounds may help support digestion and relaxation through enteric GABA receptors—highlighting a completely new mechanism for functional drinks.

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Why GABA? Why Now?

From breaking the ice to easing social anxiety, alcohol has long served as a chemical shortcut to human connection. But its widespread harm is driving urgent demand for smarter, safer alternatives. The team behind SENTIA believes that targeting GABAergic pathways—the brain's

natural system for inducing calm and reducing fear—offers a powerful foundation for a new class of adult drinks.

Where alcohol silences the brain indiscriminately, SENTIA products are designed to modulate it—delivering relaxation without sedation, and connection without compromise. And with Alcarelle, a synthetic molecule currently undergoing safety testing ahead of GRAS approval in the U.S., the company is preparing to license a flavourless, functional alcohol replacement that could be added to drinks across the global market.

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About SENTIA Spirits

SENTIA Spirits is a UK-based range of non-alcoholic, functional spirits created by a team of neuroscientists and botanical experts led by Professor David Nutt, former UK Chief Drug Advisor and author of *Drink? The New Science of Alcohol and Your Health*. SENTIA is formulated to activate the brain's GABA system, promoting a sense of relaxation and connection—without alcohol, sugar, or added calories.

Available in three award-winning blends—GABA Red, GABA Gold, and GABA Black—SENTIA has earned Gold at the 2025 New York World Spirits Competition and Silver at the L.A. Spirits Awards. It is currently available in the UK, EU, and U.S.

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