Drinking to your health? Weed killer lurks in many beers and wines

Having a beer or a glass of wine at happy hour or a backyard barbecue shouldn’t include gulping down a potentially hazardous pesticide.

But that’s likely the case, according to a new report by our research and policy partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund, titled “Glyphosate pesticide in beer and wine.” The study tested 20 different beers, wines and a hard cider. Researchers found the chemical glyphosate, which is the active ingredient in the world’s most popular weed killer, Roundup, in all but one beverage.

**Pesticide even found in organics**

Roundup even invaded three of the four organic beers and wines tested—despite strict rules prohibiting makers of those products from using glyphosate-based herbicides in production.

The upshot is that, right now in America, even the best-intentioned brewers and vintners struggle to avoid Roundup leaching into their drinks.

**How much glyphosate is too much?**

This is troubling for numerous reasons. The primary one is that glyphosate poses a health risk. Last year, a California jury concluded that not only was Roundup a “substantial factor” in causing a plaintiff’s terminal cancer, but its producer, Monsanto, also didn’t warn the plaintiff about this risk. A federal jury reached the same conclusion in March, in the first case against Monsanto to be tried in federal court.

The Roundup report doesn’t suggest that the glyphosate that partygoers are drinking reaches established danger levels.
The largest amount of the herbicide discovered in one of the wines was 51.4 parts per billion (ppb) and the beer with the highest total of the pesticide totaled 49.7 ppb. Neither of those numbers meet the Environmental Protection Agency’s risk tolerances for beverages.

That said, at least one previous scientific study found that as little as one part per trillion of glyphosate can stimulate the growth of breast cancer cells and disrupt the endocrine system. What the report raises is that we are finding Roundup in unexpected places.

**Glyphosate is showing up everywhere**

Glyphosate has infiltrated nearly every type of food tested by the Food and Drug Administration. We know that researchers are finding glyphosate in honey, cereal, ice cream, rainwater and now beverages. What we don’t know is the cumulative effect of all this glyphosate on a person over a lifetime.

Still, even if downing a couple of glasses of Roundup-tainted wine or chomping down on a bowl of glyphosate-infused cereal isn’t definitively dangerous by itself, consumers deserve better transparency.

The public has a right to know what exists in everyday products. Without that knowledge, consumers are prevented from making informed decisions about what they want to eat and drink.

If we’re truly seeking to protect the well-being of people wanting a drink or two, more should be done. Sadly, the government isn’t even conducting basic testing.

**It’s time to ban glyphosate**

Two years ago, the U.S. Department of Agriculture dropped plans to examine glyphosate in food. That would have been a good first step, and it needs to be done. Unless research proves glyphosate’s safety, we need a more direct approach: The pesticide shouldn’t be used in the United States.

Until then, it will be hard to offer a full-throated “bottoms up” to your buddies, while you’re worrying about what’s actually at the bottom of the bottle.

By Kara Cook-Schultz, director Campaign to Ban Roundup

*Originally posted at https://medium.com/u-s-pirg*

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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**PIRG CONSUMER WATCHDOG**

**How safe is our food? Not safe enough, says PIRG Consumer Watchdog team, and it’s trending in the wrong direction**

Unsafe food recalls in the U.S. are trending the wrong way. From 2013 to 2018, they rose 10 percent overall, and 83 percent for the most hazardous meat and poultry recalls.

These were the chief findings in “How Safe Is Our Food?”, a report released by our partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund, the research and policy arm of our national network. The report reached millions of people through coverage on CBS This Morning, NBC News and USA Today.

“We need to be looking for farm-to-fork preventative solutions that are logical,” PIRG Consumer Watchdog Adam Garber told USA Today. “By doing that, we can protect people’s health.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1 in 6 people in the U.S. contract foodborne illnesses each year. To stem the problem, our Consumer Watchdog team is calling...
for public health standards for contamination in agricultural water, a ban on salmonella in meat, and a better recall system to get dangerous food out of people’s homes.

**PIRG CONSUMER WATCHDOG**

**The FDA has confirmed our findings of asbestos in Claire’s makeup**

Nearly a year after a report by our partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund found asbestos in its children’s makeup products, Claire’s agreed to take action.

On March 5, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) confirmed our findings that Claire’s had been selling makeup marketed to children that contained carcinogenic asbestos. Days later, Claire’s announced it would remove three talc-based makeup products from store shelves.

“While we are relieved that children will no longer be able to buy three asbestos-containing cosmetics at Claire’s, we urge Claire’s to take stronger action,” said Kara Cook-Schultz, director of our national toxics program and lead author of last year’s report. “Many consumers still have these dangerous products on their shelves at home, and parents and kids should be informed about problems with the makeup they purchased.”

ConnPIRG’s Consumer Watchdog team is alerting consumers to dangerous products on the market, while also urging Congress to grant the FDA more enforcement power.

**NEW ECONOMY**

**Zero Hunger campaign aims to end hunger on 10 college campuses**

At least 1 in 5 college students report not having enough food to eat on a regular basis. That’s why students are teaming up on college campuses across the country to end student hunger by cutting food waste.

Since last July, our Zero Hunger team has partnered with community advocates, faculty and student organizations to host trainings and spread awareness about student hunger and how campuses can help.

“There is absolutely no reason anyone should go hungry when we produce plenty of food for everyone,” said Damiana Dendy, Zero Hunger campaign associate with U.S. PIRG Education Fund. “We want to show that zero hunger is an achievable goal, through solutions such as food rescue, meal swipe donation programs, food pantries, community gardens and more.”

ConnPIRG and our national network are also working with U.S. Rep. Judy Chu (Calif.), who introduced the Campus Hunger Reduction Act of 2018 into Congress last June. Our goal is to recruit 10 campuses to commit to zero hunger by cutting waste in 2019.
ZERO WASTE

Here’s how one PIRG member cut her plastic waste in half

As a working mom with three young kids and her own business to run, Rachel, a member of U.S. PIRG, is no doubt busy. But through small changes over time, she’s been able to dramatically reduce the plastic waste her family produces.

“I was completely surprised by how easy it is to cut down on trash. Once I swapped a single-use item out for a reusable alternative, I never had to think about buying that thing again,” Rachel told us.

“The biggest benefit is that my mentality has shifted,” she said. “While recycling is better than a landfill, reducing my consumption and eliminating single-use items is simply easier and better for the environment. I’ve become really motivated to consume less, and it’s freeing to not be constantly wanting more stuff.”

ConnPIRG’s Beyond Plastic campaign is making it easier for people like Rachel to reduce waste by calling for bans on single-use items like polystyrene cups and containers.

Dear ConnPIRG member,

We all want a healthier, safer and more secure future. In recent months, ConnPIRG took steps to make that future a reality—and we couldn’t have done it without your support. I hope you enjoy reading more about the work you made possible.

Thank you,

David Rossini
Acting Director
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