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

CALPIRG’s Mission
When consumers are cheated or the voices of ordinary citizens are drowned out by special interest lobbyists, CALPIRG speaks up and takes action. We uncover threats to public health and well-being and fight to end them, using the time-tested tools of investigative research, media exposés, grassroots organizing, advocacy and litigation. CALPIRG’s mission is to deliver persistent, results-oriented public interest activism that protects consumers, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, and fosters responsive, democratic government.

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NEWS BRIEFS

21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION

Victory: California public buses will be zero-emission by 2040

California has done it again, with more ground-breaking action on public health and to protect the environment.

This time, the state became the nation’s first to commit to a 100 percent zero-emission bus fleet. The decision came on Dec. 14, when the California Air Resources Board (CARB) unanimously approved increasingly strong purchasing standards, ultimately requiring all public transit buses to emit zero carbon and zero lung-damaging pollutants by 2040.

“No major commitment to electric buses helps bring us closer to the day when clean, electric transportation is the norm rather than the exception,” said CALPIRG Education Fund Executive Director Emily Rusch. “By committing to all-electric buses, CARB is building on its track record of innovation and environmental stewardship, not only cleaning up California’s air but also setting an example for cities and states around the country to follow.”
The board predicts that, when fully implemented, the plan will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 19 million metric tons by 2050. That’s the equivalent of taking 4 million cars off the road. CALPIRG Education Fund has worked extensively with our network partners at Environment California to make 100 percent electric buses a reality in California.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

CALPIRG’s 2019 Legislative Agenda offers steps to a healthier, more democratic California

California made strides for our health, our environment and consumer rights this past year. But there’s always more to do and CALPIRG has some ideas.

On Jan. 23, CALPIRG released our 2019 Legislative Agenda, calling for action in Sacramento on lead in water, the overuse of antibiotics, health care consumer protections, data security, clean transportation, and plastic and electronic waste.

“With so many challenges facing our country, we need California to be forging a path for solutions,” said CALPIRG’s Emily Rusch.

For instance, we are working with the California Legislature to ensure school drinking water fountains are free from lead contamination, and to accelerate the transition to clean, electric vehicles. Our victories from the last legislative session include laws that ban toxic flame retardant chemicals, protect our personal data, and promote the switch to renewable energy.

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.

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR CALIFORNIA’S FUTURE

Support our work in the public interest by including a gift to CALPIRG or CALPIRG Education Fund in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@calpirg.org
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.”

CALPIRG’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 CALPIRG member,

We all want a healthier, safer and more secure future. In recent months, CALPIRG 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,

Emily Rusch
Executive Director
info@calpirg.org

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