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*

---

**NEWS BRIEFS**

**21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION**

*Northeastern and mid-Atlantic states band together to tackle transportation pollution*

How are the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions taking on the largest source of planet-warming, climate-changing pollution?

On Dec. 18, Maryland joined Massachusetts, Delaware, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and Washington, D.C., to announce they will create a regional plan to curb transportation pollution.

“Americans want a modern transportation system that is cleaner, healthier and more efficient,” said Matt Casale, our national transportation campaign director. “We are one step closer to getting the 21st-century transportation system we need and deserve.”

The devil will be in the details, which we expect to see within the next year. The states are all part of a broader coalition called the Transportation and Climate Initiative that will develop a region-wide policy to reduce transportation emissions and transition to a low-carbon trans-
transportation system. We’re urging the initiative to support better public transit, more bike-friendly and pedestrian-friendly streets, and a transition to electric cars, trucks and buses.

**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.”

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

**LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

**For consumers, our kids, our planet and our democracy: Maryland PIRG’s legislative priorities**

Maryland lawmakers have ample opportunity to stand up for the public interest this year. We’re working to make sure they do.

On March 11, we released our 2019 legislative priorities, calling for action to stop the overuse of antibiotics, get the lead out of our drinking water, remove toxic chemicals from consumer products, reduce plastic waste, strengthen our democracy, expand clean transportation and protect our personal data.

“Maryland PIRG’s mission is to advocate for the people and stand up for the public interest. We aim to protect consumers, encourage a fair, sustainable economy, and foster democratic government,” said Maryland PIRG State Director Emily Scarr. “We are working hard on behalf of thousands of members across the state to make Maryland a healthier, safer, more democratic, and more secure place for all of us.”

Preserving the effectiveness of life-saving antibiotics is one of our top legislative priorities. We’re working to update and strengthen the Keep Antibiotics Effective Act to ensure that the Maryland Department of Agriculture enforces the law as intended.

Support our work in the public interest by including a gift to Maryland PIRG or MarylandPIRG Foundation in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

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

Maryland PIRG’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.

THANKS TO YOU

Dear Maryland PIRG member,

We all want a healthier, safer and more secure future. In recent months, Maryland PIRG 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 Scarr, State Director
info@marylandpirg.org

Printed on recycled paper