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 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

**GET THE LEAD OUT**

**Report: Massachusetts not doing enough to get the lead out of school drinking water**

Lead contaminates drinking water in schools across the country—including in Massachusetts, where 59 percent of the 43,000 taps tested at 980 schools were positive for lead.

“Get the Lead Out,” a study published March 21 by our research partners at U.S. PIRG Education Fund and Environment America Research & Policy Center, examined the policies of 31 states and Washington, D.C., and assigned grades based on how well they protect children from lead in school drinking water. Massachusetts earned a D grade, while 22 other states earned an F. Only Illinois and D.C. graded above the C range.

“Our kids deserve safe drinking water where they learn and play,” said MASSPIRG Legislative Director Deirdre Cummings. “We join with doctors, parents and local officials to call for swift action to ensure lead-free water at schools and day care centers.”
MASSPIRG and our national network are working in Massachusetts and more than a dozen states to protect drinking water for millions of children by advancing policies to proactively get the lead out.

21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION

Northeastern states band together to tackle transportation pollution

How is the Northeast taking on the largest source of planet-warming pollution?

On Dec. 18, Massachusetts joined Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, 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, MASSPIRG 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 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. MASSPIRG is joined by Environment Massachusetts in support of the initiative.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

MASSPIRG’s legislative scorecard reveals the good, the bad and the ugly of the 2017-2018 session

Our job is to stand up for the public interest, and we applaud state legislators who did that with us this past year.

On Feb. 28, we released our scorecard for the 2017-2018 legislative session. The results exemplify the bipartisan nature of our work—the lawmakers we recognized come from the left, the right and everywhere in between.

“In our role as watchdog and advocate for the public interest, we monitor the voting records of Massachusetts’ state lawmakers each legislative session,” said MASSPIRG Executive Director Janet Domenitz. “We appreciate the hard work of the entire Legislature, and particularly those that scored 100 percent.”

We graded legislators on a range of issues, including protecting consumers and voters, investing in public transportation, and defending our environment, among others. And 41 received perfect scores. While we saw some victories this session, we also saw some defeats. We hope to see more wins for the public interest next session.

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR MASSACHUSETTS’ FUTURE

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

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@masspirg.org
U.S. PIRG member Rachel and her family are working to eliminate plastic from their lives.

TOP STORY: Drinking to your health? Weed killer Roundup lurks in many beers and wines

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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.”

MASSPIRG’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 MASSPIRG member,

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

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