

Bottled water does not have any advantage over tap

Cincinnati tap water tested more often and has less harmful components

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It didn't come as a surprise when in 2004 the water in Coca-Cola's Dasani bottled water brand was found to be tap water taken from the municipal water supply. More recently, Pepsi's Aquafina brand also admitted to the same act and, as of July 27, has printed the words "Public Water Source" on every one of their bottles. When a glass of water from the tap is nearly free, why do consumers insist on draining their savings, spending roughly \$15 billion a year, according to CNN, for water in a plastic package?

Has tap water become too low-brow for most Americans? Have we reached the point where we will only drink something sold to us by a marketing team? Or are we afraid of the municipal water system that kept us and our ancestors hydrated for generations?

In the United States, bottled water is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, while water from the tap is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency. Last year, the FDA was forced to order a recall of Wegmans' Feel Good About Spring Water, when it was found to contain dangerously high concentrations of the cancer-causing chemical, bromate. In 2004, bottles of Dasani in the United Kingdom were also found to have bromate contamination. Just as important as what is in bottled water is what is not.

"Kids are getting cavities again from drinking bottled water," said David Richardson, the supervisor of water customer service for Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW). According to the GCWW web site, people who drink fluoridated water have roughly half of the number of cavities as people who drink water without fluoride, and bottled water may not contain fluoride, as many filtration devices remove fluoride from the water. As of 1970, state law requires tap water to contain fluoride, while bottled water is not. People are paying more for less.

Richardson said the cost of 750 gallons of water from the GCWW is \$1.39. The price of 750 gallons of bottled water can be as much as \$4,800.

Some people are afraid that tap water may not be safe. According to the GCWW web site, Cincinnati's tap water is tested 300 times per day to make sure it meets federal, state and local requirements for safety. "We do above and beyond all those," said Richardson. "The biggest new thing that we do is UV treatment. It disinfects chloride-resistant microbes. We use a carbon filter treatment. It was one of the first in the country. The Japanese come, even to this day, to check [the GCWW treatment plants] out." According to the FDA web site, bottled water manufacturers are only required to test for cyanide, arsenic and many other harmful chemicals once a year.

On Dec. 1, San Francisco will no longer provide bottled water to city employees, instead opting for bottleless alternatives, according to The San Francisco Chronicle. Gavin Newsom, the mayor of San Francisco, said, "The global consumption of bottled water was measured at 41 billion gallons in 2004, up 57 percent from the previous five years. This consumption increase occurred despite the fact that bottled water often costs 240 to 10,000 times more than tap water."

Newsom continued, "According to the Container Recycling Institute, supplying the plastic water bottles that American consumers purchase in one year requires more than 47 million gallons of oil, the equivalent of one billion pounds of carbon dioxide that is released into the atmosphere. Additionally, water diverted from local aquifers for the bottled water industry can strain surrounding ecosystems."

In addition, the transportation of all of the bottled water, whether it is via truck, train or boat uses large amounts of oil and fuel.

Bottled water pollutes our environment, endangers our health and wastes our money. Perhaps it is time to go back to the tap.

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