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August 14, 2007, 11:12 am

# How Do You Take Your Water?

By ALEXIS MAINLAND



If you take your water in an Aquafina bottle, you are also taking it from the tap, it turns out. (Photo: Scott Olson/Getty Images)

Updated, 5:25 p.m.

What we're hearing around the water cooler here at City Room is a lot of talk about water: what kind of water to drink, how to drink it, how to order it at a restaurant, what it costs, how it tastes and so forth.

In the Sunday Styles section, [Alex Williams wrote](#) about how bottled water, once considered a healthy convenience, has become a symbol of waste.

The Times's editorial page said to [choose tap water over bottled](#) because "The more the wealthy opt out of drinking tap water, the less political support there will be for investing in maintaining America's public water supply."

On the Diner's Journal Blog, [Frank Bruni discussed](#) the complex politics of ordering water at a restaurant.

The Week in Review section [calculated](#) that drinking eight glasses of water a day will cost you about 49 cents a year if you take it from a New York City tap and \$1,400 a year if you buy bottled.

Marian Burros [reported](#) for the Dining section in May that some New York restaurants, including Mario Batali's Del Posto, have stopped selling

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### Comment of the Moment

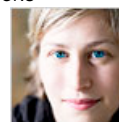
*“ Making money off of Sept. 11 does not help anybody 'remember.' It just gives out-of-towners a photo-op and a chance to feel sorry for themselves without understanding 9/11's effect on New York at all.”*

— Jake  
Art Imitates Life Recalling Death at Ground Zero

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This morning, about 130 people filled a 300-seat room, with testimony expected before the Landmarks Preservation Commission again on the proposed expansion of St. Vincent's Hospital in Greenwich Village.

bottled water as a form of environmental activism.

Aquafina turned out, like Coca-Cola's Dasani, to be just [tap water in a bottle](#). In July, PepsiCo Inc. decided to start including the words "Public Water Source" on Aquafina labels.

Earlier this summer, NPR's Morning Edition [aired a piece](#) about New York City water after city officials launched a brief poster campaign called "Get Your Fill" intended to promote drinking city water. The city health commissioner, Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, told NPR: "We have great water here. New York City tap water has been described as the Champagne of municipal tap waters."

At ABC News, Jon Stossel ran a [taste test](#), offering people New York City tap water and five other bottled waters.

We found out that if you want to pay \$30 a bottle for luxury water you can go to Via Genova, Westchester's first water bar:

We also learned about the [risks](#) of [excessive hydration](#) (not to mention the menace of [dihydrogen monoxide](#).)

We'd like to hear what kind of water you drink and what kind of water you think everyone else should drink.

**An update:** James Dobbs [asked](#) a question below about the drinking water available at the offices of The New York Times. Various brands of bottled water (both spring water and filtered tap water) can be purchased in our cafeteria and from vending machines. Our drinking fountains and kitchen taps supply New York City water that is filtered in the building. We do not use bottled water coolers such as Poland Spring because the complex electrical wiring beneath the building's floorboards could be compromised by a large spill. In short, the answer to Mr. Dobbs's question is: we use both tap water and bottled water here at The New York Times.

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79 comments so far...

1. August 14th, 2007 11:31 am

“The more the wealthy opt out of drinking tap water, the less political support there will be for investing in maintaining America’s public water supply.”

Translation: White flight all over again!

— Posted by MARK KLEIN, M.D.
2. August 14th, 2007 11:34 am

I like NYC water and have always preferred it when dining out. Unfortunately, my apartment has old, rusty pipes, so drinking it—even after running the faucet—is a somewhat iffy proposition. I suspect there are quite a number of people in the city with the same problem. And then there are the folks in Queens who rely on the aquifer.

— Posted by sparky
3. August 14th, 2007 12:10 pm

For drinking water there are 2 issues:  
quality of drinking water  
environmental impact

Best thing to do is get a filter for the house or apartment. There are many varieties - pitcher, faucet, undercounter — something for every budget.

— Posted by Andy
4. August 14th, 2007 12:10 pm

Beer... It's not just for breakfast anymore.

— Posted by Bud Lightman
5. August 14th, 2007 12:17 pm

People who claim rusty pipes should simply invest in a simple pitcher-type water filter, like a Brita. Or there are kinds that can be easily attached to the tap itself. There's no reason not to drink tap water.

— Posted by Ernst
6. August 14th, 2007 12:19 pm

Brita should be responding to the concerns of people like Sparky with a little marketing.

— Posted by dante
7. August 14th, 2007 12:24 pm

The article written by Alex Williams was insightful and certainly is making me refrain from bottled water for now but there are other issues that concern me and are not addressed in such a complicated issue. For example, how safe is tap water? How does one determine the safety of NY tap water? What studies have been done regarding the chemicals used in NY tap water? Should the age of the building and area of where you live or work affect your decision on how clean the tap water is? Before making a simple argument advocating tap water over bottled, perhaps the writer or another could educate the public more on the safety of tap water.

— Posted by SHB
8. August 14th, 2007 12:25 pm

Growing up in New York City, I took good tasting (and presumably healthy) tap-water for granted. Only after living in different parts of the country - and other parts of the world - did I come to realize how good the water in the city is. San Francisco's water, for instance, while apparently perfectly safe always had a bit of a pond-like flavor to me. Now I live in Barcelona, where the municipal water is very

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hard and has an unpleasant taste, even after filtering; and bottled water is almost a necessity. I can't understand why anyone in New York would opt to buy bottled water. The triumph of marketing I suppose. People complain about the high cost of gas (compare to the cost of bottled water which is much cheaper to produce, go figure), but ignore a free water supply in favor of overpriced packaged goods.

– Posted by Eugene Mosier

9. August 14th, 2007 12:28 pm  
Glad the Times raised this issue. For years NYC water has won the taste test. I wonder, however, what the Times newsroom and editorial personnel do at work. Does the Times supply bottled (big or little) or filtered water? Does, "do what I say, not what I do" permeate the Times? I hope not. Safe drinking water is a great treasure in this country and needs not only to be protected, but supported.

– Posted by James Dobbs

10. August 14th, 2007 12:33 pm  
You can save and reuse your Poland Spring (or other plastic water) container, filling it with clean, refreshing tap water. Travel tip: the TSA will generally let you bring empties through security, which you can then refill from a water fountain and bring onto your flight. This tip doesn't work everywhere in the world, since some airports (e.g., Amsterdam Schiphol) do a final check at the gate, but it's worth a try if you want to avoid what passes for water onboard most flights.

– Posted by TonyW

11. August 14th, 2007 12:38 pm  
I it unconscionable that there is no public drinking fountain in NY Penn Station. Anyone wishing water is compelled to buy bottled water.

– Posted by Hugh Loebner

12. August 14th, 2007 12:40 pm  
Can't go cold turkey? Try my compromise: I still buy a bottle of water from time to time, but then I refill that bottle about a dozen times during the next few days, using tap water run through the Brita filter attached to my kitchen faucet. For those of us who believe water tastes better out of a bottle, this trick seems to work.

– Posted by Janis Higginbotham

13. August 14th, 2007 12:45 pm  
Certainly for taste and convenience, I always opt for NYC tap water. However, I have not seen any compelling studies about the actual quality of the water. If NYC were truly serious about promoting its water, then it should contract with independent testing labs and periodically release tap water quality results.

– Posted by Rube Rahman

14. August 14th, 2007 12:49 pm  
Excellent article. But I do have to point out that the author did fall for one of the best hoaxes ever concocted. 'dihydrogen monoxide', aka 'DHMO' is just another way of saying 'contains 2 hydrogen and one oxygen molecules' or, 'H<sub>2</sub>O', aka water... (see wikipedia if you don't believe me). Or was this whole article also a joke????

But seriously, I do concur with the need to filter water running through old plumbing. Once filtered it is arguably HEALTHIER than bottled water.

– Posted by tommyboy

15. August 14th, 2007 12:53 pm  
I now drink filtered tap, which tastes great.  
My only concern is that there's a link between tap water and breast cancer. See <http://woman-must-know.blogspot.com/2007/06/fourteen-simple-things-you-can-do-to.html>

Has anyone been worried about this? Does filtering it really take care of this problem?

– Posted by karen

#### [Bottled Water Directory](#)

Directory of Bottled Water. Find Private Label Bottled Water.  
[PurityPlanet.com](#)

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16. August 14th, 2007 12:54 pm

Here goes the lib talking point nonsense again! Who said bottled water is for white rich people? Bottled water is a convenience that I pay for to have water on the go. Sure I can bottle it from the faucet at home. I don't buy it because it has some mystical powers or is the "in" brand. I buy it because it beats relying on having to stop at some gas station or public water fountain when I am in some out of the way place. Remember soda, or pop as we called it in the midwest? That was our mainstay of hydration until the yuppies started the bottled water craze. Better than soda—no sugar, no artificial anything—just water in a bottle. How much better can it get? Unless, of course you are a lefty and then bottled water was invented by a Republican, or white rich people, or some other half-baked talking point that the libs are so fond of.

I am a right-wing poor white old guy that sure wishes the libs could talk about something besides their talking points.

— Posted by Jim P

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17. August 14th, 2007 12:55 pm

Tap water is protected by the Safe Drinking Water Act, regulated by the EPA. Every year the public water department is required to send a "right to know" report to its consumers. The act required water to be tested for over 200 chemicals and biological constituents. Also, the SDWA is stronger, tougher than the FDA regulations are on bottled water. So, in theory your drinking water is safe. But then you can question budgets for regulating water safety and is testing for these many chemicals/biological hazards enough?

— Posted by Rachel Katonak

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18. August 14th, 2007 1:03 pm

I take it whatever way I can get it! It is what it is.

— Posted by Karen

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19. August 14th, 2007 1:06 pm

@Tommyboy, the author obviously knows that. I buy water when I need to buy something to drink. I see it as not buying soda or something bad for the environment and my teeth. In my apartment and office, I drink tap.

— Posted by Paul

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20. August 14th, 2007 1:06 pm

Tap water is perfectly safe. People will engage in any sort of fantasy to help themselves think they are exerting some form of control over the world. Hence, people drink bottled water in the belief that they are avoiding health hazards. Expensive delusion.

Although the mention of the existence of "luxury water," sold for \$30/bottle, is horrific, it is not as bad as what I saw on a shelf in a Cape Cod supermarket. I saw "Organic" Bottled Water (as if using the term 'organic' for certain foods wasn't idiotic enough). This sighting may have shaken my faith in humanity.

— Posted by D

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21. August 14th, 2007 1:08 pm

I am waiting for the day that municipal water suppliers sue bottled water marketers for false claims. Bottled water IMHO is no safer than any municipal water in the United States. The whole scam started in the late '70 with people claiming that municipal water was not safe and the bottled water marketers have been very adept at keeping the myth going.

— Posted by David S.

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22. August 14th, 2007 1:14 pm

Janis Higginbotham brings up a point not clearly addressed in the article: the massive waste of unrecycled plastic water bottles. Thankfully she recycles hers for re-use. Take a stroll along the newly animated piers of the Hudson River to see the thousands of bottles bobbing up and down in the water, never to be reclaimed. This non-degradable waste (not to mention plastic shopping bags) will clog our environment for ever.

– Posted by david

- 
23. August 14th, 2007 1:14 pm
- I would like to know, why no one is being told that tap water as is, is bad for you. It has chlorine, a highly irritating, greenish yellow gaseous element, used in making chloroform and used as a disinfectant. It has fluoride, a binary compound of fluorine, a highly corrosive, poisonous, gaseous element, the most electronegative and reactive to all elements. If I can't eat, I don't let it touch my body. Bottled water is all about the money. Aquafina-purified tap water. What a hoot! Most water around the world is polluted with something or another but to blatantly allow people to believe tap water in the USA is safe for drinking is another one of the egregious acts committed against the populace. I won't even cook with it. Anyway, are we recycling all these plastic bottles? If the water doesn't get polluted, then we don't need chemicals to kill the pollution. Stop Pollution First! Why do we chemically treat the water? IT'S BAD! WILL YOU, WILLINGLY DRINK CHEMICALS? NO! Sure, the infamous they, say, it small amounts, these chemicals do no harm. I ask, in continuous dosages, what happens? I'm not chancing it! I'm not drinking it! I'm telling all my friends about it!

I will only drink purified spring water and bathe in tap water that has a filter attached to the nozzle. The only thing I tap is my foot to the beat of long life without chemicals!

– Posted by Tracy C. James

- 
24. August 14th, 2007 1:15 pm
- What people need to know is whether the filtration process used for Aquafina, Dasani, and other "P.W.S." (ha ha) bottled waters is better than that used by municipalities. Despite claims in numerous reports in the Times and elsewhere, these bottlers do not simply run tap water into bottles, cap and sell them. The Times is propogating misinformation there. Still...

Publicly accessible (via the Web) data on the parts-per-million and -billion of various metals and toxins in both tap water and various bottled waters should be mandated by law. This data should be easy to find, updated monthly — perhaps even weekly — not once or twice per year as municipalities usually do. Or never, as is the case with most water bottlers.

When people see that the levels of certain metals and toxins are similar in tap and bottled waters, they'll likely be impelled to make the switch.

The Times and other media will also need to teach people about whether certain metal ions like Arsenic are in fact bad for you. Arsenic, Molybdenum, and other nasty metals are toxins, but are actually required by a number of human enzymes as cofactors, so a miniscule amount of these ions is probably good for human health, believe it or not.

– Posted by David

- 
25. August 14th, 2007 1:23 pm
- I spent two spectacular days in a row last week at Jones Beach. While this park is generally well tended, before we set up for the day, I routinely pick up and dispose of the litter that I find in the immediate area of my blanket. And what does that consist of? Plastic water bottles and assorted plastic bottle caps.

By and large, it's not soda cans you find on the beach. A simple step to reduce bottled water waste would be for ALBANY TO PASS THE BETTER BOTTLE BILL! We'd discourage needless use and create an incentive to recyle.

– Posted by Olaf

- 
26. August 14th, 2007 1:25 pm
- I support drinking tap water and taking care of our water resources, much more seriously. I have had the same thought myself, that people should not let go of the right to have clean tap water, by buying too much of the alternative, and then losing the original source due to lack of support.

Here in Vancouver the tap water is usually great, except for the occasional landslide into the watershed, but some of us keep some

water on hand just in case, so we don't have to fight over bottled water in the store parking lot in the rain like other idiots. In last fall's 2-week problem with silt in the water, we never had to buy water because of thinking ahead and using our saved water and also rainwater, not to mention that by the second day the water was perfectly drinkable. It was hardly a "crisis", certainly not the kind of drought many people in the world have to contend with.

However, I worry about the insidious reduction of public drinking fountains, especially near Dasani water machines. Schools and colleges and cities are not so great at repairing broken water fountains, claiming the parts aren't available, or some other b\*s\* reason. Actually Vancouver has a lot of good public water fountains and I'm grateful for that.

Likewise it would be great if we all had access to public restrooms everywhere, with good cold running water, and not lukewarm automatic spray.

If I do buy bottled water for keeping in the car, I make sure it's from here in British Columbia, knowing it's from the same sources as our great tap water.

Keep up the good work, New York!

And did you know that beer was very popular with the early colonists in the US because of worries about drinking water?

Jennifer

– Posted by Jennifer

27. August  
14th,  
2007  
1:34 pm

"I now drink filtered tap, which tastes great. My only concern is that there's a link between tap water and breast cancer. See <http://woman-must-know.blogspot.com/2007/06/fourteen-simple-things-you-can-do-to.html> Has anyone been worried about this? Does filtering it really take care of this problem?"— Posted by karen

Karen,

If you are going to post such comments read the whole blog entry. The following is taken from the aforementioned page.

"Avoid tap water unless you live either in Lake Tahoe or Ithaca, New York. The tap water here in Tucson is CAP water that travels in an open trough from the Colorado River. It is loaded with fungicides / herbicides not to mention all the chlorine added once it gets here. While bottled or filtered water may not be perfect, you will considerably reduce your risk for any cancer by avoiding most tap water".

Debatable but not entirely correct..besides if you want to give continued readership and traffic to a blog make sure you are linking one that is reputable..I don't know about that particular blog...but it sure doesn't look that good; given the non-scientific generalization from "Dr. C.A. Passey" the blogger, now does it?

Sorry got a little off topic...but needless to say, a number of cities (Erie, Pa) for instance have only recently begun to fluoridate their water (last 7 years or so) and having previously lived there for a number of year...trust me it didn't taste so good. NYC city water has been fluoridated for decades...and having just moved here...trust me it tastes better. As for the bottled water...some bottled water, I have found leave a slight greasy film on my palate.

Either way...get a filter and reusable bottle. Cut back on the plastic.

– Posted by Suki F

28. August  
14th,  
2007  
1:36 pm

As Rachel Katonak noted, FDA regulations on bottled water pale in comparison to EPA regulations on tap water. The EPA tests and filters tap water annually for inorganic and organic compounds, pesticides, and microbes that can make their way into the water system due to human activity. These standards are so strict that many bottled waters would not pass. Furthermore, specialty waters (Evian), sparkling waters, and mineral waters are not required to undergo these tests because, for regulatory purposes, they are classified in the same category as soft drinks. In conclusion, "pure spring drinking water" could have far more contaminants than your

tap water.

Also, filling up flimsy plastic water bottles repeatedly breaks down the plastic interior (water is the best known natural solvent). This then mixes with the water you drink. On the other hand, sturdier bottles like Nalgene are made from sturdier plastic, so the risk is reduced.

Cheers to tap water!

– Posted by Sam Blodgett

- 
29. August 14th, 2007 1:38 pm  
Reusing bottles is not safe, within hours of opening the bottle bacteria begins to form inside. I would reuse the bottle for a few hours, but not more than a day.  
– Posted by Water Lawyer
- 
30. August 14th, 2007 1:39 pm  
Ah...if only people took the money they spent on bottled water (excluding those traveling or on the go who have need of a portable source) and spent it on health care & better eating (lower fat diets, fresh veggies & fruit, exercise, annual physicals, mammograms, colonoscopies etc.).  
a far better investment...  
of course I own stock in a bottled beverage (and water) company... who am I to complain?  
– Posted by David
- 
31. August 14th, 2007 1:41 pm  
As long as bottled beverage sales remain high, we should encourage water to be a very high percentage of those sales, as it is healthier. Remember, bottle water has grown over the past 15 years or so at the expense of less healthy fake juices and full calorie sodas. At the end of the day bottled and canned beverages are going to keep selling well because of convenience, and bottled water should be a part of that.  
There is something to be said for purified, tap water bottled by local (or at least regional) bottling plants vs Fiji, Evian, etc. which are flown in from halfway around the world.  
– Posted by Powell
- 
32. August 14th, 2007 1:42 pm  
Filtered tap water is the way to go, especially in NYC.  
Big Business would like very much to control water rights and accessibility, and are already doing so in various countries around the world. A disaster for people everywhere! Rejecting bottled water can help frustrate such efforts.  
– Posted by Carlo
- 
33. August 14th, 2007 1:46 pm  
@Tracy - chlorine is essential for life. And fluoride, well, you better ditch your toothpaste.  
– Posted by John
- 
34. August 14th, 2007 1:46 pm  
The does indeed publish the results of its water testing on the web here in the Annual Drinking Water Quality Report:  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/drinking\\_water/wsstate.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/drinking_water/wsstate.shtml)  
It does indeed have chlorine and fluoride. The chlorine will evaporate out if you leave the water in a pitcher in the refrigerator for a few hours. The fluoride is another story, and you may like it or you may not, but it's in there.  
– Posted by Sam
- 
35. August 14th, 2007 1:48 pm  
I have a 400 foot deep well here in the Missouri Ozarks. The water that comes out of my tap is the best tasting water I've ever experienced. It has been tested and, other than being "hard" is remarkably free of any contaminants. I have a small collection of insulated and uninsulated bottles that I fill and take with me to work and on other trips. I'm also afraid to tell Tracy James that "purified

spring water” likely has more “chemical contaminants” than tap water. Yes, tap water has minuscule amounts of chlorine and often fluoride but spring water usually contains much more dissolved mineral content, especially if tap water is from surface sources like reservoirs.

I'd like to second the beer comments too. Beer is good for you and the aluminum and glass containers are more easily recyclable than plastic soda or water bottles.

– Posted by Jeff

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36. August  
14th,  
2007  
1:51 pm

I have to ask Tracey C. James, do you brush your teeth? use soap? cleaning products (even natural ones)? these are all chemicals, at least in the most general sense. Many things can be considered a “chemical”, whether synthetic or naturally occurring, and they aren't all bad or dangerous.

As for water, I have a 1 liter reusable bottle and fill it up at the fountain at work a couple of times a day. Also use the good old standby of a cup/glass/mug when times are tough and I forgot the bottle. Tap water is well regulated in the US, and very rarely unsafe - usually only after a natural disaster of rare mechanical malfunction. Home filters are cheap and take care of most flavor issues.

– Posted by Molly

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37. August  
14th,  
2007  
1:55 pm

As long as tap water is safe and plentiful, it will always be my choice. It's easy enough to filter when necessary and supporting the public water source will help protect the public water source. Even if I preferred the taste of a bottled water over tap (which I don't), I would make this choice because **PLASTIC BOTTLES DO NOT BIODEGRADE!**

Yes, they can be recycled but anyone who thinks that all of the millions (billions?) of plastic bottles used in this country each day are recycled and therefore barely impacting the environment has their head in the sand. Not to mention the untold chemicals that leach from the plastic bottles into the water and into your bodies – as far as I'm concerned, the water my parents and grandparents drank is safer than the water cooking in the sun as it sits in plastic in a hot car (or hot delivery truck somewhere).

Insisting on plastic water bottles in New York City is a little bit like driving a gas guzzling Hummer in the age of global warming: selfish, pointless, wasteful, and harmful.

– Posted by Mary

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38. August  
14th,  
2007  
1:56 pm

All these people worried about water like Tracy (24), these are the kinds of people that are so worried about nonsense.

Anyone that (purposely) drinks bottled water is taking part in the destruction of the environment and the decay of our tap water that ultimately hurts the masses.

I bet you that most of us are sooo willing to smoke some weed that came from God knows what, take some prescription that will cause God knows what, even sleep with people that have been with who knows who!

We are all way too careful, and at the end that is not life.

– Posted by Eddie B

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39. August  
14th,  
2007  
1:57 pm

One more comment for Tracy - yes, chlorine and fluorine are toxic in their elemental, gaseous forms, but so are many other things. Better stay away from oxygen, just think about how dangerous and explosive it is...

– Posted by Molly

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40. August  
14th,  
2007  
1:58 pm

Without resorting to water bottle extremism (feel guilty about buying a bottle of water?... sheesh), I follow the simple principle of drinking from a source I can control. At home, filtered tap water (which is supposed to be drinkable anyway) and then outside, from bottles. In restaurants I drink tap water if I trust the restaurant enough. I really

don't think environmental concerns need enter into the picture when you consider what you pay for a bottle of water..

– Posted by Guru

- 
41. August 14th, 2007 1:58 pm  
Ever try to get a glass of tap water while walking down a street in NYC? Really want to drink out of a public fountain after a snotty nosed kid?  
– Posted by JB
- 
42. August 14th, 2007 1:59 pm  
i like beer because it does not leave coffee stains...  
– Posted by Vlad
- 
43. August 14th, 2007 2:11 pm  
Let's see, do I drink my own tap water at next to zero cost or someone else's tap water bottled by cola companies that run the same water they use to make colas into plastic bottles and then charge about twice as much for that water as they do for the cola they make out of someone else's tap water? Hmmm...silly me...I drink my own...  
I guess that means I support socialized water...  
– Posted by Tom McMahan
- 
44. August 14th, 2007 2:15 pm  
@Tracy C. James  
Water fluoridation uses compounds of that exist in nature. The whole practice of fluoridation was discovered by a community that had few cavities in their teeth due to their \*NATURALLY FLUORIDATED\* water from Pike's Peak in Colorado.  
  
Chlorination kills harmful bacteria and viruses. Would you rather have a water-borne infection or wait a few seconds for the chlorine to dissipate?  
  
In either case - your spring water is not guaranteed to be free from fertilizer run-off or other very nasty contaminants.  
  
Your only real solution is to create your own distilled water - in this way you can be sure that it is pure. It'll taste vile, your detergents and soaps will be less effective and you'll need to produce it "just-in-time" to prevent microbes, insects and other unpleasantness from taking root. Otherwise - have fun.  
– Posted by Jack Hawkins
- 
45. August 14th, 2007 2:29 pm  
I keep some 1-liter plastic bottles in my office and in my fridge; I refill them again and again. Buy new ones every 2 months or so.  
– Posted by MissPinkKate
- 
46. August 14th, 2007 2:33 pm  
re: rusty pipes and filters–  
I'm the poster from #2. I have a countertop filter (for consumption) and a shower filter (chlorine). But, of course, they clog frequently due to whatever is in the pipes. I don't use pitchers because most of them, AFAIK, don't actually filter that many potentially harmful chemicals/minerals/organisms.  
  
Chlorine is a necessary evil for public water, but it would seem to be sensible to reduce our intake of it, if possible. Or switch to an all beer system....  
– Posted by sparky
- 
47. August 14th, 2007 2:34 pm  
I think rather than prove that tap water is safe, one might look into how safe bottled water is. Bottled water is a manufactured product stored in plastic bottles. How much of the plastic is leached into the bottle? What other chemicals are put into the water? How safe is the bottling plant? What are the ramifications of the lack of fluoride consumed by our youth, that was previously consumed through tap water?  
– Posted by Steve

48. August 14th, 2007 2:47 pm

I'm an environmental engineer specializing in surface water chemistry. Go with the tap water! Carry around a good quality lexan (nalgene style) or coated metal bottle (Sigg style) and fill it up whenever you need to. This way you won't have any chemicals from the cheap plastic getting into the water and it's just as convenient as purchased water. These bottles aren't very heavy and they come in many sizes (plus some of the bottles, the Sigg ones especially, have super cute patterns on them).

EPA standards for drinking water are more strict than the FDA standards for bottled water. Depending on the source of the water you might be paying for lower quality water in the bottle.

As for distilled water ... it isn't a good idea to drink. The water is so pure that it will flush nutrients out of your body instead of hydrating. Your body is well adapted to drinking water with low concentrations of salts and minerals in it.

Tap and pitcher filters really work well as long as you change them regularly to avoid mold growing on them.

Good luck to everyone ... there's always a trade off. So, don't stress too much!

– Posted by kcoloradoc

49. August 14th, 2007 2:47 pm

I live in the nation's capitol, where the drinking water is, frankly, not high quality. Several years ago there were real problems with lead, which the DC Water & Sewer Agency says they've corrected. Currently we get periodic spikes in the level of chlorine. We're supposed to be reassured that over the course of the year our exposure level is safe, but I prefer to know that every day of the year my children and I are drinking safe, clean, healthy water. The fact that this isn't the case in Washington D.C. is just one more reason to be ashamed of this city.

– Posted by Kimber

50. August 14th, 2007 2:48 pm

@Tracy C. James:

Really the only way to truly avoid the chemicals in water is to strictly use distilled water. Even spring water is subject to contaminated runoff.

On another note, in the 1990's, when my brother was in high school, he did a science project involving the cleanliness of bottled water. He took a liter of 3 brands (Crystal Geyser, Aquafina and I think Arrowhead and a liter of tap water, which originated in the Clackamas River watershed in Oregon) and distilled them individually. By comparing the grit left after distillation, Aquafina was by far the dirtiest. The tap water was the cleanest.

– Posted by Eric

51. August 14th, 2007 2:51 pm

Perhaps one of the most humorous aspects of bottled water is that some brands carry an expiration date for their product. Imagine, expired H<sub>2</sub>O. I always thought it had a shelf life of several billion years.

– Posted by david

52. August 14th, 2007 2:52 pm

@Tracy:

If chlorine is such a nasty element, then why does your body produce 2-3 liters of gastric acid—which contains lots and lots of chlorine, since it's hydrochloric acid plus salts—every single day?

Also, you'll want to stay away from table salt. And don't eat plants—they contain nasty chlorophyll.

– Posted by lone1c

53. August 14th, 2007 2:57 pm

I buy a bottle of water (bottled in NY) approximately every 4 months and wash and refill the bottle with tap water (for me, from a 300-foot-deep well). Eventually the bottle gets damaged or I forget to

2:54 pm

bring it with me and I buy a new bottle. I recycle the old bottle. Does my well water taste just as good as or better than the bottled water? Yes. Does municipal water? Usually, no. (NYC is one exception.)

I think ultimately it's all about compromise — bottled water has a place in our society, but let's reduce our dependence on it (especially if it's not produced locally or regionally) while making meaningful efforts to promote recycling (of water AND soda bottles — as well as plastic bags, yogurt containers, shampoo bottles, etc.).

— Posted by Laura

54. August  
14th,  
2007  
3:03 pm

I'm a tap water filtered by Brita fan, but my office has Poland Spring bottles. Half the reason I like my Brita is because it's cold. If I could fill a pitcher and stick it in the fridge at work I'd be able to absolve my conscience, but I think businesses are a major problem in terms of supply. There are 600 people in my NYC office all drinking bottled water with no other options.

I have nothing wrong with tap water, but does anyone else notice that NYC tap water has a quasi sulfuric smell to it? It seems to wane and wax, but is most prevalent in the summer. I've been saying this for 2 years and no one believes me, but I finally have 2 friends who smell it frequently. I know it's impulse to say, "it's the pipes," but my water is never brown, I've lived in 4 different buildings in 2 years, and I consistently catch the scent in my tap water at restaurants. That's like 30 different tap sources that all smell the same.

Anyone live in a new Manhattan condo? That's probably the only way to ensure that new plumbing also has that same scent. Anyone else not think I'm crazy? Businesses need to stop supplying bottled water; fine they recycle, but we shouldn't be creating this waste in the first place.

— Posted by adam

55. August  
14th,  
2007  
3:04 pm

I grew up on NYC water. I have told many people who I have met over the years that NYC water is the best in the country and it is as good or better than bottled water.

Bottled water thru great marketing has become a very large business.

Besides the public is lazy and wont take a bottle of tap water from home

Why should those bottlers let you believe that tap water is just as good.

It is true in some parts of this country ie . Florida the tap water is not good- I now live on NJ. and with the toxics in the ground i could understand the concern. In countries where there is little water or just not as pure it is justified for the use of bottled water.

With many immigrants and people not native to the NY area. it is a meca for the use of bottled water.

Therefore the bottlers have accomplished their marketing stratagy and have created a multi - million dollar industry on something you can get at no cost- except possibly a water tax-

Try NY water after its been chilled - better yet from the tap in the winter time - its clean and refreshing.

E-mail me if there is any further discussion re NYC water. Would love to be part of a debate in this topic

— Posted by Art

56. August  
14th,  
2007  
3:04 pm

I grew up drinking tap water in Providence, RI — I thought it tasted great. I drank tap water when I lived in Brooklyn; it was ok but I didn't think it tasted as good. I even drank tap water in LA, sometimes filtered with Brita or Pur. Now that I live in the Presidio in SF, which has their own potable water source, my roommate insists on getting bottled water which is expensive and a pain to change on the dispenser. But then, all our neighbors also get water delivered— the only reason I drink it is that I am paying for it, but it seems so stupid.

— Posted by Jenn

- 
57. August 14th, 2007 3:05 pm Penn and Teller did a great routine on bottled water vs NYC tap water several years ago.  
[http://digg.com/videos/educational/Penn\\_Teller\\_The\\_Truth\\_About\\_Bottled\\_Water](http://digg.com/videos/educational/Penn_Teller_The_Truth_About_Bottled_Water) People couldn't tell the difference, but were impressed by the fancy bottles they filled from a hose.  
 – Posted by Robert Blankenship
- 
58. August 14th, 2007 3:06 pm Oy!!! No one addresses the real problem (save the conservative #17). The rest is just rubbish like excess bottles.  
 I like tap water. Drink it at a restaurant and at home. BUT, when out in public or on a trip somewhere I don't have an empty (or full) bottle of water from tap always on me. That's why people used to buy soda! Soda, though, is not healthful.  
 The problem is one of recycling bottles. There are no public water fountains (or restrooms).  
 – Posted by Bill
- 
59. August 14th, 2007 3:13 pm I find the water thing very funny. I have been telling people for years they are spending more money on bottled water than gasoline.  
 – Posted by Bruno Jakob
- 
60. August 14th, 2007 3:16 pm REFILLING BOTTLES: When consumers choose to refill and reuse convenience-size plastic bottles, should they be concerned about potentially harmful bacteria? NO.  
 Not if they clean their plastic bottles between uses just as they would other drinking containers. Plastics are by nature extremely sanitary materials, and plastic bottles are no more likely to harbor bacteria than other kinds of packaging or drinking containers.  
 – Posted by Janis Higginbotham
- 
61. August 14th, 2007 3:18 pm We have a two-stage, whole-house water filter, and the first filter turns dark brown within a couple of days. It certainly gets rid of sediment and that awful chlorine taste and smell.  
 We put in a two-stage, whole-house water filter in my step-daughter's house in Pittsburgh, PA. In less than a day it was black! Ugh.  
 I would not drink unfiltered water unless I had to. There is potable water and then there is clean water.  
 – Posted by TwoEvils
- 
62. August 14th, 2007 3:26 pm I am skeptical of nyc tap water. I've had brooklyn tap water that tasted awesome. But the water on the upper east side is very sketchy, and I believe it comes from reservoirs closer the city in the Hudson valley. So I know there is a wide range of water quality in nyc.  
 And I remember reading about some water inspectors faking their results. Why should we trust the city just because they claim the water is great? Show me the labs on water with lead, mercury and chlorine amounts for my neighborhood, and maybe then I'll believe you. But if I lived in a pre-war building I still wouldn't drink tap water.  
 It is ridiculous to compare tap water to the foul tasting Aquafina water. With a bottle of Fiji or Evian you are paying for a high quality mineral water, and you know what you are drinking.  
 I am a big environmentalist. But seriously, there are many more high waste areas we should focus on first. Like the mountain of plastic toys people buy for kids.  
<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F30810FC385FoC7B8DDDAE0894D8404482>  
 – Posted by Stephen de las Heras
- 
63. August It may surprise you to learn that not all people who are carrying a

- 14th, 2007 3:28 pm  
bottle of Evian are actually drinking Evian. I clean and partially fill a few bottles of Evian daily with city water. Then, I freeze the nearly full bottles. In the morning I fill a bottle with more tap water, and with one more refill I have cool water to drink until noon.
- I probably use a dozen or so Evian bottles a year due to loss and damage. And I am able to maintain hydration without stopping to drink from public water fountains or buying bottled water.
- Posted by Janet
- 
64. August 14th, 2007 3:35 pm  
To those looking for more information, there is tons of information on EPA's website [epa.gov/safewater](http://epa.gov/safewater) and on NYCDEP website [http://nyc.gov/html/dep/html/drinking\\_water/index.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/dep/html/drinking_water/index.shtml) including the results of the hundreds of thousands of analyses that are required to be done (and published) each year and information on source water protection. Fight to protect your reservoirs and aquifer watersheds — even if they're far away and out of sight...you need them!
- Posted by Carrie
- 
65. August 14th, 2007 3:37 pm  
For all of the plastic bottle re-fillers out there — there have been a lot of articles published lately about the dangers of re-using plastic bottles. Also freezing them and/or letting them heat up....?
- Posted by Kay
- 
66. August 14th, 2007 3:44 pm  
This is a tough proposition. I've lived in Philadelphia, New York City, Yonkers, and now Newark, and between the occasional spurt of brown water and the regular chlorine-redolant glasses, I can attest that city water isn't always palatable. I'm more skeptical of those bottled water companies than I am my friendly neighborhood water treatment plant, though. With a Pur filter installed on my kitchen sink, a Nalgene bottle, and many, many sliced lemons, I've managed to keep my gallon-a-day habit under a dollar a week for years now.
- Posted by MCH
- 
67. August 14th, 2007 3:46 pm  
I think its important to note that tap water undergoes rigorous testing and must live up to a wide array of water quality parameters in the US (for large public systems, ie any city in the US). In short, US tap water is very highly regulated; whereas there are no federal standard guidelines for bottled water - it is not required by law to meet a certain set of water quality standards. Water for thought.
- Posted by Brian
- 
68. August 14th, 2007 3:49 pm  
I grew up on well water in the south, which is wonderful. Yet the best tasting water I've ever had was in the Bronx, when working at a summer camp — water so cool pulsing out of the open fire hydrants. Sure the temperature was hot, so the cold water was an instant hit, but it tasted great as well! I've never had better.
- Posted by Gabe
- 
69. August 14th, 2007 4:29 pm  
i eschew water for beer...24 hours in a day, 24 bottles in a case, coincidence? i think not!
- Posted by dougk
- 
70. August 14th, 2007 4:36 pm  
All very interesting comments. I live near New Paltz (mid-Hudson valley) and I find it outrageous that people who seem to be environmentally concerned about their health and therefore drink bottled water litter the back roads with their empty bottles. How sad.
- I carry a small nalgene bottle with me at all times along with a platypus 2 liter reservoir — all filled with tap water.
- Think of the environmental costs to bottled water — taking tap or so-called spring water, treating it (more poorly than tap), putting it into bottles (produced with a lot of energy from petroleum by-products), capping the bottles, labeling them, packing them (using more plastic

and wood by-products), then spending huge sums of money and petroleum to ship the bottles to warehouses then to stores then to homes. How absurd when all you need to do is get a filter if you want and fill a couple of bottles at home, walk out the door and you're set for the day. What a waste.

– Posted by Larry

71. August  
14th,  
2007  
6:02 pm

I also live in Washington, DC and can second Kimbers comment that we are not fortunate enough to have water that we can trust to be safe. There have been a number of occasions when the public has not been alerted until well after the fact that there were safety issues with the water. But, I guess that falls in the idea that the water is safe of the course of the year but not necessarily today ;)

While I drink bottled water more for convenience when I'm on the run (the idea of the germs and lack of cleanliness associated with public drinking fountains has a high ick factor for me) I also like that is purified. I think this that article (as well as many others) is misleading since it leads people to believe that Aquafina is the same as if you went to your tap when it is not.

– Posted by Bella

72. August  
14th,  
2007  
6:44 pm

Even the talk of these commercial re-usable bottles strikes me as wasteful.

I buy Dole bottled juice in the 12 oz size and the bottle that it comes in is heavy-weight, has a nice wide neck opening and fits great in bike water-bottle holders. (unlike Poland Spring or Aqua Vita)

I just run tap water through a Brita filter, into the (now technically recycled) Dole bottle, throw it in the freezer...

– Posted by MrManhattan

73. August  
15th,  
2007  
11:02 am

Take it one step further: Brew your own beer and/or ferment your own wine at home. It's not that difficult, and saves \$\$\$. It also saves bottles, since most of us home brewers / home vintners reuse bottles we've either emptied ourselves or scavenged from others.

Speaking of soft drinks — normally the two-liter sizes are much cheaper per ounce than the multi-packs of smaller bottles, yet a single large bottle loses its carbonation once you've opened it. I buy 2L bottles and then refill emptied 1/2-liter and 12-oz. bottles. I don't lose much carbonation that way and I am throwing away fewer bottles.

Is that taking this notion to extreme? For some, perhaps. All depends on how you spend your "free" time.

– Posted by Richard in Allentown, PA

74. August  
15th,  
2007  
12:50 pm

How do you take your phone?

MULTI-ASKING  
iPhone, shmiPhone,  
Leave me alone;  
You're hardly sublime.

Until you're a device that'll let me call, listen to a hip-hop hit, check my email, view a video and shave at the same time.

– Posted by Leon Freilich

75. August  
16th,  
2007  
2:04 pm

Bottled water is not necessarily healthier or safer than tap water. Twenty-five percent of all bottled water is actually repackaged tap water.

Bottled water doesn't deserve the nutritional halo that most people give it for being pure, If you're not an exclusive bottled water drinker, you may find it worthwhile to check into filtering your tap water to save money. In a recent Gallop survey, most consumers said they drink bottled water because they perceive it to be purer than tap water. Taste and convenience are also factors.

Because bottled water is considered a food, it is regulated by the US Food and Drug Administration. Tap water is regulated by the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency. Both types of water are subject to testing for contaminants.

An estimated 60 to 70 percent of all bottled water in the U.S. is packaged and sold within the same state, which exempts it from FDA regulation. And 1 in 5 states do not regulate that bottled water.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which regulates bottled water at the federal level, permits the product to contain certain levels of fecal matter, whereas the Environmental Protection Agency does not allow any human waste in city tap water. Bottled water violations are not always reported to the public, and in most cases the products may be recalled up to 15 months after the problematic water was produced, distributed, and sold.

Moreover, tests on 1,000 bottles of 103 different brands of bottled water found man-made chemicals, bacteria and arsenic in 22 percent of the bottles.

Tap water is also not immune to contamination problems. While most cities meet the standards for tap water, some tap water in the 19 U.S. cities tested was found to contain arsenic, lead, and pesticides.

Solution: Try a Multipure water filter for one week! If you like the taste you will probably buy one.

Cost: 8 cents per gallon or \$5 a month. If you are paying more, you are paying too much!

Filter: Is changed (once) a year!

Compare and save! Look at the rest then buy the best.

Feel free to contact me with any questions in the drinking water field. I have been an Independent distributor of Multipure drinking water systems for over 13 years. #223193

920-517-3282 Chris [waterfilters@gmail.com](mailto:waterfilters@gmail.com)

Online Filter Store: [www.multipureusa.com/canderson](http://www.multipureusa.com/canderson)

– Posted by Chris Anderson

76. August  
16th,  
2007  
6:54 pm

I'm a former educator and educational toy store owner. I recently submitted a patent pending idea that turns previously discarded water bottles into an entertaining and educational experience for children. For consumers and educational institutions, this added value beyond refreshment could motivate them to purchase a product packaged in reusable containers that provide ongoing fun and creative inspiration.

– Posted by Steve Klein

77. August  
22nd,  
2007  
12:29 pm

I would warn people to watch out for those water fountains. When I went to college: I noticed that the water fountain near my major had mold growing on the spout. Five years later the mold was larger, since no one had ever cleaned it. I started to look around and notice that most water fountains are never cleaned.

– Posted by S L Dale

78. August  
22nd,  
2007  
12:54 pm

Wanting to stem waste by not using the gazillions of disposable water bottles is great and all, but since many if not most consumers want the convenience of a one-time-use bottle of water. Plus, what most pro-tap water people don't consider is that even if a municipality's water receives high ratings, it's at the water plant and not at a house's tap ... which often times has lead pipes and may have been contaminated by sewage and etc. on its long journey to the house's tap.

Also, the "argument" about municipal water not receiving funding or whatever because of people not purchasing its water is weak; after all, doesn't PepsiCo use tap water for its Aquafina brand anyway? Plus, basic economics (mainly supply and demand and product competition) is being disregarded by the municipalities ... supply a good and cheap product, and they (the consumer) will come.

– Posted by Steve

79. August  
30th,  
2007  
10:00 pm

I admit that I did not read all of the comments nor the article but I do not hear much about the fact that the plastic actually should not be used or reused because the plastic causes cancer. By the way

10:03 PM

styrofoam also causes cancer, is totally unrecyclable and never breaks down. Does anybody know where to buy Sigg bottles or stainless steel bottles in NY or NJ besides the internet? that is not thru the internet.

– Posted by watersnob

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