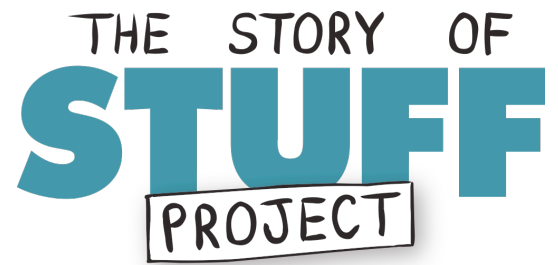

THE STORY OF BOTTLED WATER

FAQs



Is bottled water cleaner?

The EPA regulates tap water under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Public water operators must provide reports to customers describing their water's source, evidence of contaminants, and compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. The FDA regulates bottled water and cannot require certified lab testing or violation reporting; bottlers themselves are responsible for testing. Furthermore, the FDA doesn't require bottled water companies to disclose where the water came from, how it was treated, or what contaminants it contains.

Is bottled water tastier?

Corporate Accountability International's "Think Outside the Bottle" Campaign has held countless taste tests comparing bottled water to tap water, as have many media outlets, from the New York Times to Cleveland's local TV news channel. The results generally favor the tap. But ultimately, the point isn't whether one tastes better than the other, it's how our taste—and our tastes—are shaped by advertising rather than by what's good for us.

Is bottled tap different than plain tap?

Bottled water companies go to great length to tell you that while their water originates from a public water source, it's more than just filtered tap water. They boast proprietary, state-of-the-art, multistage filtration processes and esoteric references to mineral additives that make their water more than just water, and certainly better than tap. But, as Tony Clarke of Canada's Polaris Institute points out in his book, *Inside the Bottle*, "unlike other resource production processes, where raw materials like timber, minerals, and oil are transformed into new products, bottled water is different. Bottled water is about 'turning water into water.'" And keep in mind that 10 percent to 15 percent of the cost of bottled water goes to the advertising budget. We not only buy their myths, we pay extra for them!

What's the energy footprint of water bottles?

The Pacific Institute breaks it down like this: "Because bottled water required approximately 1 million tons of PET [Polyethylene Terephthalate] in 2006, those bottles required roughly 100 billion MJ of energy. A barrel of oil contains around 6,000 MJ, so producing those bottles required the equivalent of around 17 million barrels of oil. This is enough energy to fuel one million American cars for one year." If that sounds crazy that's because it is!

Really, water is a right?

General Comment 15 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—the definitive interpretation of human rights laws regarding water—says "the human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses" ... and ... "is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights." In other words, it is the job of our governments (as the entities responsible for guaranteeing human rights) to ensure that we have good, clean, affordable tap water.

Need some first steps to take?

Many companies sell safe, easy-to-clean, lightweight drinking water bottles. Food & Water Watch and Corporate Accountability International—two of our partners on this film—offer sleek, stainless steel, reusable bottles to their members. Or pick up a mug or glass or sippy cup or ... well, you get the point. An under-the-sink filter can eliminate both bacterial and chemical concerns if you have either. And you can learn more about your water quality by contacting your local water utility. If find something that concerns you, don't just turn to bottled water, ask questions, talk to your neighbors and organize to win improvements to your water supply.

What can I do?

Before the bottled water craze hit, we took it for granted that public fountains were part of any public building: schools, offices, sports stadiums and parks. Let's bring them back! In the U.S., many state building codes mandate that there be one source of public water for every 1,000 people the building has capacity for. Why not subsidize public water fountains as part

of local efforts to build green? Bottled water bans are also spreading fast. In the U.S., San Francisco, Minneapolis, Seattle, and Salt Lake City have all banned bottled water at city functions to save money and promote their cities' highly drinkable tap water. And in Canada, the Polaris Institute reports that as of December 2009, 72 municipalities from 8 provinces and 2 territories had implemented restrictions on bottled water. Way to go!