



What the Big Thinkers Drink

☞ Tap water. This nation has sunk incredible amounts of money and talent into making sure everyone has access to clean drinking water. Now people prefer to buy water that's been sitting on a shelf in a plastic bottle. To me, this is folly defined."

Bill McKibben, environmentalist and the author of *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*

WHAT YOU'RE BUYING

Claims That Are Hard to Swallow



Liter for liter, bottled water costs hundreds of times as much as the stuff that gushes from the tap, but otherwise it isn't so different—except that it's subject to a good deal less monitoring, says Peter Gleick, author of *Bottled and Sold*. In fact, between 25 and 45 percent of the bottled water sold in the United States originates as tap water. Maybe that's why some manufacturers make such extravagant claims:

● **It's "oxygenated."** Some bottled brands supposedly contain up to 40 times as much oxygen as conventional water; ads say the extra oxygen improves athletic performance. But scientists who tested five brands of oxygen-enriched water found no performance boost—not surprising, the researchers say, since a single breath contains more oxygen than a

whole bottle of oxygenated water. All you get from oxygen-enriched water is an expensive burp, says Gleick.

● **It's "structured."** For years, the manufacturer of Penta water claimed its water had "30 percent smaller molecular water clusters" that hydrate you better. The company has backed off on some of those claims after being challenged by British regulators, but Penta still says its water may help prevent disease and lengthen life—with no accepted scientific evidence to support that idea, Gleick points out.

● **It's a "diet aid."** Can drinking bottled water help you shed unwanted pounds? Yes and no. Drinking lots of water can promote weight loss. But you get that advantage with any kind of water—whether or not it's enriched with vitamins, minerals, or other ingredients. D. F.

6 Reasons Bottled Is All Wet

Yes, bottled water is sometimes the most convenient option. It can also be ...

Intellectually bewildering

H2Om: "While you drink in the delicious spring water, you are living in the 'now,' and you are naturally in a grateful state of being."

Holy Drinking Water: "If you are a sinner or evil in nature, this product may cause burning, intense heat, sweating, skin irritation, rashes, itchiness, vomiting, bloodshot and watery eyes, pale skin color, and oral irritations."

Semantically confusing

These bottled waters are drawn from the tap. In some cases, bottlers add minerals and filter or distill the water.

Alaska Premium Glacier
Aquafina
Dasani
Glacéau Smartwater
Nestlé Pure Life
Yosemite

Geographically challenged

From natural springs? Maybe. But Gleick points out that the springs aren't where you'd think.

Arctic Clear (source of water: Tennessee)

Arctic Falls Bottled (New Jersey)

Arctic Springs (California)

Arctic Wolf Spring (New Jersey)

Glacier Mountain Natural Spring (New Jersey)

Glacier Mountain Bottled (Ohio)

Everest (Texas)



Calorically enhanced

Vitaminwater: 125 calories, 33 grams of sugar per 20-ounce bottle. (In response to a lawsuit, lawyers for Coca-Cola said, "No consumer could reasonably be misled into thinking that vitamin-water was a healthy beverage.")

O.N.E. Coconut Water: 60 calories, 14 grams of sugar per 11.2-ounce container.

SoBe LifeWater (antioxidant flavors): 100 calories, 24 grams of sugar per 20-ounce bottle.

Financially demanding (but shipping is free)

Bling Water: "The Ten Thousand" is a 750-milliliter bottle of water that sells for \$2,600. The bottle has more than 10,000 hand-applied Swarovski crystals.

Acqua di Cristallo Tributo a Modigliani: A 1,250-milliliter gold-plated bottle of water costs \$3,600.

Ecologically challenging

Fiji: bottled and shipped from Viti Levu, Fiji (7,800 miles to New York City)

Voss: bottled in Southern Norway

Perrier: bottled in Vergèze, France

Evian: bottled in the Rhône-Alpes region of southeastern France

Antipodes: bottled in Whakatane, New Zealand