

Bottled Water

What You Need to Know

In the last decade millions of people have taken to purchasing bottled water. In fact, bottled water has become a \$4 billion industry popular with everyone from people on the go to athletes and celebrities.

Yes, it's true Jack Nicholson smuggled a one-liter bottle into a no-beverages section at the Oscars. And it's also true that Racquel Welch not only drinks Evian, but washes her hair with it. And Michael Jackson? He ordered his bottled water 32 cases at a time because he bathed in it.

But what exactly are spring, mineral, and artesian waters? What follows are the answers to popular questions about bottled water.

Are there different types of bottled waters?

The FDA, which regulates bottled water, has separate definitions for the following, which can all be bottled waters: artesian or artesian well water, fluoridated, mineral, purified, sparkling, spring, and well.

What are the differences in the bottled waters?

- Artesian water comes from a well tapping a confined aquifer in which the water level stands at some height above the top of the aquifer.
- Fluoridated water contains fluoride, added within the limitations established in the Code of Federal Regulations.
- Mineral water contains not less than 250 parts per million total dissolved solids, comes from a source tapped at one or more boreholes or springs, and originates from a geologically and physically protected underground water source.
- Purified water has been produced by distillation, deionization, reverse osmosis, or other processes that meet the definition of "purified" in the United States.
- Sparkling water contains the same amount of carbon dioxide that it had at the emergence from its source.
- Spring water is derived from an underground formation from which water flows naturally to the earth's surface.

Is all bottled water from the ground?

According to government and industry estimates, 25 percent of the bottled water on the market is tap water from community municipal water systems.

Is bottled water better than treated well water?

Seventy-five percent of the bottled water on the market is groundwater. It is the same as what is used by 47 percent of Americans as their daily source of water at homes and businesses.

Does bottled water taste better?

Bottled water fans say they taste chemicals in other waters. Some city systems do add chlorine to their water, which in turn can form additional chemicals called trihalomethanes. However, while high amounts of trihalomethanes should be a concern, not all city systems add chlorine. And trihalomethanes are rarely a problem with groundwater because groundwater does not contain much dissolved material for the chlorine to combine with. Groundwater can pick up characteristics of the rock formation that it has been in contact with, but any bottled water drawn from the ground can as well.

Is bottled water healthier?

Contrary to what some bottled water drinkers believe, the vast majority of the country's aquifers are not polluted, and water obtained from them is clean and safe.

People with weakened immune systems such as the elderly, some infants, transplant or cancer patients, or people with HIV/AIDS have been advised at times to drink bottled water instead of tap water. While this may be smart for those who get their water from a surface source, it is probably not necessary for someone receiving water from a known well source.

When is bottled water a good option?

Being prepared is always important. Having water on hand, especially bulk-bottles such as five-gallon supplies, is good for situations such as storms or natural disasters. Disasters can severely damage public and private water supplies for extended periods of time.

But a quick one-liter bottle for \$0.99 to \$1.49 to have on the go equates to \$3.96 to \$5.96 a gallon—numbers that make gas prices look cheap.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on your private water well, contact your local contractor. Also, visit the Web site of the National Ground Water Association, www.ngwa.org, and its site just for well owners, www.wellowner.org.



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