



NYC: Drink Tap Water to Save Oil

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Ok, I drink bottled water every so often, like when it's the only thing around. And I'll re-use bottles several times before I put it into the recycling bin. Mostly I carry around a reusable hard plastic bottle and fill it with tap water. But there are many people in New York City who consume most, if not all of their water from bottles instead of the tap. All of that water is delivered by trucks from hundreds or thousands of miles away. Fiji water comes from nearly half a world away.

One way that NYC could become a role model to the rest of the nation is by going back to the tap. This was recently highlighted in [Brooklyn Papers](#) about one woman's effort in Park Slope to steer people away from bottled water.

Here's the reporter's digest of her arguments:

First, there is the packaging and transportation, issues.



- Bottled water bottles are made from oil, a limited resource. Just making the containers alone consumes more than 1.5 million barrels of oil annually, enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year, according to the Earth Policy Institute. (Maybe we should get rid of the cars, but that's a topic for another time.)
- It takes a lot of oil to transport bottled water from supposedly pristine springs all over the world to us. That bottle of Fiji water really does come from Fiji -- and it doesn't walk here by itself.

And all those trucks eventually clog our roads and double park in front of stores and offices to deliver their unneeded goods. But that's just the production half of the equation, there's the disposal too:

* Thirty million bottles end up in landfills every day -- and considering that New York doesn't have its own landfill anymore, we have to pay to dump our empty water bottles elsewhere.

Ok, maybe you are starting to get the point, but maybe you think that bottled water tastes better or is safer somehow? Think Again.

* New York City tap water is safer and better than bottled water anyway. **The Environmental Protection Agency's standard for tap water, for example, is stiffer than the Food and Drug Administration's standard for bottled water.** Plus, our tap water tastes better than all those fancy waters (the Aquafina that's bottled in Queens actually is New York City tap water -- which is then distilled and reconfigured with Aquafina's proprietary mix of minerals.)

Now that Aquafina business sounds pretty good. Sell water that's virtually free and charge \$1/bottle. That all adds up to quite a big business and charges of inequity across the world

- The world spends \$100 billion a year on bottled water at a time when the United Nations says that just \$15 billion could double the number of people who have access to safe drinking water.
- And, rich people consume far more bottled water than poor people -- so if tap water quality declines, it will fall to the politically less powerful to fight for cleaner water because the rich have turned their backs on the entire system.

So New Yorkers, here's a few suggestions on how to cut your personal water bottle usage no matter where you are:

1. At home, use a cup and fill it with tap water
2. On the go bring along a reusable hard plastic bottle and refill as necessary with tap water, remember to wash it periodically.
3. At the office, leave behind some mugs and cups that you can use there, again washing them periodically - the same applies to your morning coffee
4. If you end up having no choice and bottled is all there is available, save that bottle and reuse

And if you're worried that we might drink ourselves into a drought if we all turn on the tap, don't worry about it, you're covered:

Of the 1.2 billion gallons of water used by New York City every day, less than one percent is poured down the gullet.

"The vast majority of water is used for sanitation, toilets, showers, dishes, street sweeping, and the like," said Ian Michaels, a spokesman for the city Department of Environmental Protection.

"So even if all the bottled water drinkers came back to our system, the effect would be practically unnoticeable."

So drink up New York. Drink tap water, reduce our dependence on oil, reduce traffic chaos and pollution in the city and be a good global citizen



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