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Dairy industry petition to FDA regarding artificial sweeteners in milk

Tuesday, April 02, 2013

It's important to be specific.

The Internet is wonderful for disseminating information quickly. "Going viral" is now a regular part of our vocabulary. It's important to get the facts out there. Some "facts" are true and some completely false. Some fall in that grey area and they are the most difficult to deal with.

Because my personal choice is to avoid artificial sweeteners I was forwarded a petition to express my opposition to the dairy industry's petition to the FDA to:

"add chemical sweeteners to milk and 16 other dairy products -- without telling consumers"

As a moderate in most things, I tend to check out both sides of any issue. The dairy industry websites say that the consumer originated petition is incorrect. The artificial ingredients would still be listed in the ingredient list, but they do not want the visible front label to include "reduced sugar" or "low calorie" because this would make the product less popular with school children. It seems that milk consumption is dropping in schools.

There are other forms of the "anti" petition out there which state the facts more accurately. Note that I'm not posting links to anything. I understand the need for sugar alternatives for medical reasons and personal choice. You can google this issue yourselves if you want to express your opinion.

However, I also know that the front label of "reduced sugar" or "low calorie" prompts me to read the ingredient list carefully. Some of them are very long and complicated even for an intelligent, retired senior citizen like me with more time than the average working person.

I was very surprised last year when my favorite "all natural" ICE CREAM became a DAIRY DESSERT with the change noted only in very small print.

I resent any attempt to obscure information (whether intentionally or inadvertently) and make informed choice more difficult whether in labeling or in petitions.

For the record, I do oppose what the dairy industry is trying to do, but before I sign a petition, I want it to state the facts accurately. Not doing so actually hurts their cause.

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GINIEMIE

Considering the allergies caused by artificial sweeteners this idea should be nixed. Even children have to watch for certain allergies, peanuts, mangoes, agave syrup, artificial sweeteners, eggs and the list goes on. It is not right to add something and not give fair warning, no matter the rationale!



2994 days ago



LOLATURTLE

Thanks for this! I was frustrated too because the first time I read about it, the person posting was all upset that the dairy industry was trying to "hide" artificial sweeteners in milk. Like, they were going to start sweetening plain skim milk with nothing on the label.

This only applies to flavored products, like chocolate milk and flavored yogurts. So as it stands now, milk with added chocolate and sugar is "chocolate milk." If they make a product with chocolate and splenda, they have to call it "chocolate drink" or "chocolate dairy beverage".

I don't personally care what the definition of "milk" is, because I read labels. It's not the grand conspiracy by the evil dairy magnates that some would make it out to be. But I do think we need to speak up on behalf of those who don't know how to read labels.

I feel the same way about this as I do about GMOs - it's not that everything is fine and hunky dory and we should just sit back and let the food industry call the shots. But stretching the truth the other way and engaging in scare tactics doesn't help anyone. It just confuses the issues even more.

2994 days ago



MISCHAKEO

I do not like the dishonesty either. Plus there are people who get reactions to the artificial sweeteners and it should be on the label. The argument that kids will not drink milk if it is labeled low fat is crazy. Kids should only be offered no sugar no flavored milk at school..not chocolate. If that is all they had to drink, they would drink it.

You do have to look at the low fat or low sugar ingredients carefully. They are often deceptive and not good for you.

Thanks for an informative blog. I did not know this was going on.
2994 days ago



CD6210994

Thanks for pointing this out! I hadn't actually done my due diligence with regards to this one and while the sneakiness is still frustrating, it's not the outrage I originally took it to be.

Kudos!
2995 days ago



LJCANNON

THANK YOU!

Thank You!! I so appreciate how you presented this Information!! I WILL be checking out the Website, and Double Checking Labels every time I shop.

2995 days ago



CAKEMAKERMOM

From what I read (when it "went viral" the other day), it wasn't going to be changing the ingredients in the products they already have, they're simply protesting the "front labeling" of the products. Unfortunately, not all people are aware of ingredients as we all seem to be.

The food industry needs more truth in labeling, including all "natural and artificial flavoring", Gmo's, and reality in how animals are raised. Hormones and anti-biotics shouldn't be a daily standard in animals. If we treated the animals with respect and real grass, there wouldn't be so many problems. I like how my local farmers are raising their livestock vs what "corporate farms" are doing to theirs.

2995 days ago



BARBARAJ73

Hear, hear!!! I spent my whole career trying to teach kids how to find and verify information (as well as a "few" other things.) It's not an easy task (either teaching or ferreting out accurate, unbiased information!)

2995 days ago





BELLAMEMAW

The dairy/meat industry is so deep in the pocket of the government (and visa versa) it's frightening. I'm a vegan so I don't drink milk anyway. However, even the soy milk and almond milk I buy isn't what they portray it to be. I'm getting to the point of pressing my own almond milk.

Very scary the games big industry plays with all of us.

Thank you for an insightful and thought provoking post. Pat
2995 days ago



CELIAMINER

This attempt by the milk producers to deceptively conceal artificial sweeteners really burns me!



I try to avoid artificial sweeteners most of the time, so I am a careful label reader. On rare occasion, I use a little stevia, but that's about it.

What I found when I Googled the petition is this:
"IDFA [International Dairy Foods Association] and NMPF [National Milk Producers Federation] request their proposed amendments to the milk standard of identity to allow optional characterizing flavoring ingredients used in milk (e.g., chocolate flavoring added to milk) to be sweetened with any safe and suitable sweetener—including non-nutritive sweeteners such as aspartame."

and

"The FDA confirms that the dairy industry is attempting to conceal the use of aspartame in milk, saying: 'If the standard of identity for milk is amended as requested by petitioners, milk manufacturers could use non-nutritive sweeteners in flavored milk without a nutrient content claim in its labeling.'"

Grrrrr!

2995 days ago



NELLJONES

I don't buy any dairy with any added flavors or sweeteners. Everything is available "plain" and I can add whatever I want.

2995 days ago



CD13167855

As someone lactose intolerant, I would want to label to tell me if they replaced the lactose with something else. I wouldn't want to look for something that would be so helpful in the small print. Children don't buy the product. Their parents do. Parents would like to information to be easy to find.

2995 days ago



CD13680648

I could not agree more!

(And it wouldn't be regular milk, either, "just" so-called milk products, which as I understand it does however include things like chocolate or other flavored milks.)

I want to bash my head against a wall every time that petition comes around because what the industry wants to do is so clearly deceptive and so clearly profit-motivated at the expense of both informed choice and potentially health -- but it's NOT what the petition says it is. Aaaargh.

Can't people see they're just opening themselves up to ridicule and undeserved dismissal of a real concern when they can't be bothered to get the facts right?

Double-check *every* internet outrage before you go around endorsing it and passing it around, even if it seems to conform with everything you already believe about what's true and right in the world. No, *especially* if it does so, because that's when you get fooled.

2995 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM

I'm an inveterate label reader, but you remind me to re-check even products that I've been using for a while. I remember being shocked at the sweetness of a yogurt I'd bought with the "Fat Free" label, several years ago... reading the label and finding the added sugars! Ouch.

So, even when you think you know... it is wise to double check.

2995 days ago



CD12146214

Wow that is huge.....if they tried that here in Canada there would be a revolt. Hopefully it doesn't happen in the US.

2995 days ago

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