



FAQs: ARSENIC IN WINE

Does arsenic in wine pose a risk to consumers?

No. All wines sold in the U.S. market are safe. Wines from around the world contain trace amounts of arsenic -- as do fruits, vegetables, grains, water, juice and other beverages – and do not pose a risk to consumers. The lawsuit alleging that the trace amounts of arsenic found in wine pose a risk to consumers has no scientific basis and was dismissed by the courts.

How does arsenic get into foods and beverages?

Arsenic is found naturally in air, soil and water. As an agricultural product, wines from around the world contain trace amounts of arsenic as do virtually all foods and beverages.

What is the safe level of arsenic in wine?

The U.S. government has not established a limit for arsenic in wine --or any other food or beverage, except drinking water -- because there is no body of evidence to support the claim that the trace amounts of arsenic found in wine pose a risk. The FDA has been monitoring arsenic content in foods and beverages for over 20 years. The FDA has tested wine for arsenic content and found the data did not warrant establishment of a limit. Canada and the OIV, an intergovernmental organization of 43 wine-producing countries, have set limits for arsenic in wine ranging from 100 to 200 parts per billion (ppb) – 10 to 20 times the level the EPA determined to be safe for drinking water. California wines fall well below these limits.

Should wine have the same limit as water for arsenic?

There is no scientific basis for applying the EPA drinking water standard to wine. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) spokeswoman Lauren Sucher explains that the drinking water standard “is of limited use when considering any potential health risks related to arsenic in wine. People drink far more water than they do wine over their lifetimes, and they start drinking water earlier in life. Thus, both the amount and period of exposure are different and would require separate analyses.”

Do California wines contain different levels of arsenic compared to other regions?

All wines from around the world contain trace amounts of arsenic. In 2014, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) Quality Assurance Laboratory tested 17,537 wines from around the world, including 2,247 wines from California. The data show that the levels of arsenic are consistent for wines from around the world and wines from California. 99.6% of the global wines had arsenic levels of 25 ppb or less, while 99.2% of the wines from California had levels of 25 ppb or less.