



AARP®

8 Foods We Eat That Other Countries Ban

Posted on 06/25/2013 by [Candy Sagon](#) | Personal Health and Well-being |



There are chemicals and additives we allow in our snacks, drinks and packaged foods that other countries consider so unhealthy, they've banned them.

What are we talking about?

Here's just one example: Fake coloring that gives those eerie bright hues to boxed mac and cheese, breakfast cereal, candy and soft drinks. Linked to behavioral changes in children, allergies, migraines and possibly cancer, those dyes are banned in several countries plus the United Kingdom — but not in the United States.

In March, two mothers petitioned Kraft to use safer, natural coloring in their mac and cheese products, as the company does in other countries where the dyes are illegal. Kraft said no.

Or how about brominated vegetable oil, or BVO, that's added to citrus-flavored soda (like Mountain Dew) and sports drinks to make the artificial colors stick to the liquid. BVO contains bromine, which is used as a flame-retardant and has been linked to neurological problems and interference with thyroid hormones.

BVO has been banned in all European Union countries, as well as India and Japan, yet it's in U.S. products. In January, PepsiCo announced it would no longer use the additive in Gatorade, after consumers complained, but would leave it in Mountain Dew.

The full list of foods with questionable chemicals banned elsewhere comes from a new book by nutritionists Jayson Calton, Ph.D., and Mira Carlton called *Rich Food, Poor Food*. It was also reported by [BuzzFeed.com](#). Here are eight banned foods available in the U.S.

1. **Artificially colored food** made with dyes derived from petroleum and coal tar. Yellow 5, Red 40 and six others dyes — used to enhance products from Froot Loops to Nutri-Grain cereal bars — are called the "rainbow of risk" by the Center for Science in the Public Interest. They are banned in Norway, Finland, France, Austria and the U.K.

2. **Chicken with arsenic.** Arsenic in chicken feed cuts down on parasites, makes chickens grow faster and gives their meat more color. It also gives the chicken we eat higher levels of arsenic, known to cause lung, bladder and skin cancers, a study last month by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore found. Arsenic-laced feed is banned in the European Union.
3. **Drinks with brominated vegetable oil (BVO).** Bromine is a chemical used to keep carpets from catching fire, among other things, so why is it in our food? PepsiCo is removing it from Gatorade but keeping it in Mountain Dew. BVO is banned in more than 100 countries.
4. **Breads with potassium bromate, used in bromated flour** to make bread products rise higher and faster. Found in rolls, bagel chips, bread crumbs and flatbreads, potassium bromate has been linked to thyroid and kidney cancers in lab animals. It has been banned in Europe, Canada and China. California declared it a carcinogen in 1991.
5. **Frozen dinners with azodicarbonamide.** This is used to bleach and stabilize flour and also to make foamed plastic products like yoga mats and sneakers. Found in frozen TV dinners, packaged baked goods and some breads, it has been associated with inducing asthma. It is banned in Australia, the U.K. and most European countries.
6. **Food preserved with BHA and BHT.** These preservatives are added to cereal, nut mixes, gum, butter, meat and dehydrated potatoes to keep them from turning rancid. The debate over their safety has been going on in the U.S. for years. Meanwhile, they're banned in the U.K., Japan and many European countries.
7. **Milk with rBGH and rBST, also known as bovine growth hormones.** Synthetic hormones, these are given to cows and therefore found in milk and other dairy products (unless the label specifically says otherwise). They have been linked to cancer and infertility and are banned in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan and the European Union.
8. **Chips with Olestra or Olean,** a fat substitute used in fat-free chips, like Ruffles Wow. Olestra and Olean can produce cramps and leaky bowels and are banned in the U.K. and Canada.

Biography: Candy Sagon writes about health topics for AARP. She previously was a reporter with the Washington Post and has written numerous articles on food, health and nutrition for national magazines

Photo: commons.wikimedia.org