

Misconceptions and truths about bottled water

It's time to sort fact from fiction. The magic of natural bottled water is like wine, each body of water originates in a specific area, with intricate geology yielding special characteristics and taste. Wine cognoscenti - connoisseurs of bottled water, actually make recommendations about which waters to serve with different dishes. So, just how honest is a bottle of water when a tap for most is usually a few metres away? Let's discuss some of the most frequent misconceptions regarding bottled water:

1. Bottled water is not better quality than tap and not as well regulated.

South African bottled water adheres to most stringent SANBWA standards and is regulated by The Department of Health. The DOH adheres to international Codex and WHO standards. In fact, the SANBWA standard is being benchmarked against international standards, which the NSF wants to adopt as an internationally recognised copyrighted standard.

2. Anyone can bottle water in South Africa and sell it so you don't know what you're getting.

SANBWA regulates 80% of bottled water in South Africa which is strictly controlled by superb internationally legislated standards. SANBWA water is never untreated tap water. Look for the SANBWA logo on the bottle – it's a safety guarantee.



3. Businesses deplete natural resources of water and have no 'green' conscience.

Legislation covering the use of groundwater is well developed in SA and companies pumping water from natural sources need to install a permanent bottling plant before start up. This is a phenomenal capital investment along with the cost of acquiring the land and source development and protection. Setting up such a plant in order to run an aquifer dry is not viable. SANBWA is committed to promoting environmental stewardship and issued its members environmental standards which are formally audited annually. These standards account for 10% of the full operational audit. SANBWA members use only sustainable and rechargeable sources. Water is bottled in PET bottles that are 100% recyclable.

4. Bottled water can get old and has a shelf life

Bottled water can last indefinitely if bottled correctly. Best before dates and batch dates are mostly used for stock rotation purposes. CSIR studies found that total microbiological count in bottled water at point of sale is not an indication of quality. Therefore all tests reported as showing zero coli forms and E.coli actually indicate that the water is of good quality.

5. PET water bottles are a health hazard if reused or left in the sun

PET bottles have been thoroughly tested and approved as safe for reuse by international health authorities. Scare stories released by the University of Idaho and others did their rounds on the internet without verification and made incorrect claims about PET which is as safe to drink from as glass. PET is re-useable, safe if heated in a hot car, and safe to freeze.

6. Bottled water is unnecessary and elitist

The technology and effort that's applied to acquiring and purifying bottled water is more costly and effective than municipal water. Hence the improved taste. Bottled water offers freedom of choice from shelves where alternative choices contain calories, caffeine, sugar, colourants, flavours and alcohol. Bottled water is a healthy beverage alternative.

7. PET plastic contains bisphenol A and other dangerous chemicals that leach from plastic

Bisphenol A is not used to make PET. There are no dioxins in PET either. PET doesn't contain phthalates – a chemical used to soften other types of plastic. Despite numerous studies DEHA and antimony pose no risk to health in PET bottles.

8. The numbers on plastic bottles indicate degree of toxicity and how many times you can reuse the bottle.

Numbers on plastic bottles refer to the type of plastic used in the manufacture of the bottle. PET bottles are identified with the letters PET or a small '1' under the bottle - PET is totally safe. This numbering system is also used to facilitate sorting for recycling purposes.