

Would You Like Some Petroleum With Your Apple?

Jon Burras

Imagine biting into that savory "*Red Delicious*" apple on a warm summer day. The sweet juices run down your mouth as the soft crunch fills you with delight. Fond memories are rekindled from your childhood when mom would pack an apple in your lunch box or cut up the apple into small wedges to be dipped into peanut butter and eaten as an afternoon snack. What could be more wholesome and satisfying than enjoying eating a cool fresh apple right off the grocer's shelf?

Think again. In most cases, every time you bite into an apple you are also biting through a thin layer of wax sprayed on by growers and distributors. You are not only eating something as hearty as an apple, you could also be eating something that is derived from petroleum. You could be eating the same oil that comes from an oil drilling rig. We do this every day without realizing the impact it might have on us.

Apples are not alone in this wax coating that is placed on them. There are several other fruits and vegetable that receive these unappetizing coatings once they are picked from nature's bounty. These other fruits and vegetables include the following:

apples, bell peppers, lemons, limes, oranges, eggplants, cucumbers, grapefruits, parsnips, passion fruit, peaches, potatoes, pumpkins, rutabaga, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, and yucca

Many trace the waxing of fruits and vegetables in America back to the 1920's. This is when the industrialization of our food supply began to be accelerated. While America is not alone in the world of waxing fruits and vegetables, we are certainly a leader in the innovation of waxing techniques.

Growers will apply a thin layer of wax on fruits and vegetables for several reasons. First, a shiny apple is much more appealing to eat than a dull-appearing apple. Appearance matters when you are trying to sell a product. Secondly, wax coatings prevent produce from "sweating", thus holding onto their moisture longer on the store shelf. Who wants to buy a shrunken and bedraggled piece of fruit when shopping?

Next, a coating of wax will allow the produce to stay on the shelf longer. In this manner, grocery stores and distributors can attain greater profits by being able to buy larger portions of produce that will not rot as quickly and will not have to be thrown away. Also, a wax coating provides a slippery skin so that produce that is loaded in

a crate for shipping will have less chance of being scarred upon arrival at the grocery store.

This is all well and fine. But is the wax on fruits and vegetable really something that we should be putting into our bodies on a regular basis? That is the sixty-four thousand dollar question. The trusted authority that most people rely on is the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). According to the FDA, food grade petroleum and other waxing components are completely "safe". But one has to remember, this is the same FDA that calls vaccines "safe and effective" even after thousands of people have been killed off by vaccines and millions have been injured.

This is the same FDA that has approved artificial sweeteners despite many people becoming sick and dying after prolonged exposure. This is the same FDA that approved the drug Vioxx. Vioxx reportedly killed between 55,000 and 500,000 people. So when it comes to the FDA, many people believe that protecting the profits of corporations almost always comes before protecting the health of the consumer. While many people go along with the FDA's approval of wax on fruit, there are many more who might be skeptical about the safety of such a product. "*FDA Approved*" does not mean the same for everyone.

What is fruit and vegetable wax made of? There are many different ingredients that growers might use to wax their produce. The FDA has labeled all of them as "food grade." To start off with, many conventional growers use petroleum-based products to wax their produce. Petroleum comes from an oil field. These include the following: mineral oil, paraffin and polyethylene. Polyethylene is the chief ingredient in all plastics. Petroleum-based products are the most popular and abundant type of wax coating applied. When eating a piece of produce with this type of wax coating, you are also receiving a "food grade" portion of petroleum or plastic.

The next level of wax appears to be a bit more holistic. This might include such products like sugar cane, carnauba, stearic acid, naturally occurring resin or casein. Some of these are derived from insects or in the case of carnauba, it comes from palm trees. You might find a more organic grower to use something like Aloe Vera or Chritosan. Chritosan comes from the outer shell of shellfish that is commonly used as a fat blocker.

As if the wax itself were not enough, many growers add additional ingredients to enhance the wax coating. These additional ingredients might be soy, peanut, gluten, dairy derivatives like whey, plasticizers, minerals, vitamins, coloring agents or flavors. Morpholine is also frequently added to wax. Morpholine has been linked to impaired kidney and liver function. There are some wax coatings that contain fungicides, bactericides and growth regulators. All the former are FDA approved.

Imagine if you are strict vegan and you bite into an apple that contains dairy products like whey. Imagine if you have an allergy to something like shellfish or peanuts and you suddenly become ill and fall into "shock" from eating a wax-coated piece of fruit or vegetable. You might have to be rushed to the emergency room from an allergic reaction to soy after eating just one apple. Imagine all the plastic coatings and coloring agents still sitting in your body somewhere.

The FDA has ruled that wax on fruit and vegetables is completely "safe" as it is not digested or absorbed by the body. It is assumed that these wax coatings just pass right through us. Think again. Ask any homeowner who has lived in the same house for over fifty years. The plumbing will probably be pretty slow and stagnant as calcium has built up on sewer pipes, trees roots have invaded the plumbing system and overall "gunk" coats the inside of pipes. This is what the average organ and digestive system looks like for most of us.

The wax coatings most likely do not leave your body as the FDA has assured you. Much of it might get clogged in your liver creating such wonderful things like gallstones and parasites. Those stones then lead to a clogged gallbladder and a diseased liver. The wax could end up in your brain, kidneys or gut as well.

An average apple is coated with about two drops of wax on it. If you ate one apple every day for a year you would have approximately six-tenths of an ounce of wax in your body. That might not seem like a lot at first, but consider that over the course of your lifetime. If you ate an apple a day for 50 years you might have 2 lbs of wax in you. And that is just the apple wax. Consider all of the other fruits and vegetables that contain a shiny coat of wax on them. We are probably more plastic and petroleum inside of us than anyone would care to think about.

Leave it to science to destroy what nature has created. Waxing fruits and vegetables does not help the consumer; wax on produce only benefits the growers, distributors and supermarkets.

Some people might not mind eating some petroleum with their apple. Others might be horrified to learn how their natural lifestyle has been tarnished by scientific Frankenstein-like experiments. Giving an apple to your favorite teacher might take on a whole new meaning after learning how the apple might be tarnished with a wax coating. The old rhyme, "*An apple a day keeps the doctor away*", might have to be changed. The new rhyme might say, "*An apple a day is the quickest way to have to visit a doctor.*"

Solutions

1. Grow your own food
2. Shop at local farmer's markets
3. Buy only organic fruits and vegetables
4. Buy vegetables wrapped in saran wrap (like an English cucumber)

- 5. Wash all produce when you get home (mild soap, vinegar, baking soda)**
- 6. Do not buy the shiniest fruits and vegetables**
- 7. Scrub off the wax coating with a mild scrub brush**
- 8. Peel the skin off all fruits and vegetables**