

Raw Milk Vending Machines Flourish in Europe

- Raw milk vending machines provide a convenient outlet for residents in many countries to stock up on what is considered a healthy and wholesome food
- Self-service machines may be found at farmers markets and small farms as well as in shopping centers and near schools and playgrounds
- Farmers are connected to the units via a real-time cellphone app, which sends out an alert if there's a temperature change and even lets farmers check into the machine's status at any time; inspectors are also given key cards so they can access the machines
- While many Europeans are free to enjoy a glass of crisp raw milk anytime they like courtesy of self-serve vending machines, in North America selling raw milk is often forbidden
- In Canada, it's illegal to sell or give away raw milk, a law that's enforced in many provinces and is punishable by fines and, in some cases, jail time

By Dr. Mercola

Would you love to visit a grass fed family farm where you can fill up a glass bottle with farm-fresh raw milk from a vending machine explicitly made for this purpose? In the U.K., this is not at all unusual. In fact, raw milk vending machines are becoming increasingly popular, including the one recently installed at Home Farm, a dairy farm in Hassop, England.

In its first two weeks of operation, the farm owners say the machine has been a huge success and received “incredible” customer feedback. Known as the Simply Milk machine, it's refilled every morning and provides fresh chilled milk from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

One liter of milk (about one-quarter gallon) costs £1.20 (about \$1.54), providing a veritable bargain for consumers and an extra income source for the farm. Charlotte Dilks, who runs the farm with her parents and siblings, told Matlock Mercury news:

“When you pasteurize milk to make it keep longer, the heat process kills a lot of the bacteria, which can be good for your health and gives it more flavor. People love the creamy, fresh taste of raw milk and keep coming back for more.

Children especially love the machine ... People also like how they can see the herd in the field across the road and make the connection about where the milk comes from. When you buy a bottle of milk in the supermarket, it's easy to forget about the cows.”

Europe Makes Access to Raw Milk Easy

Raw milk vending machines provide a convenient outlet for residents to stock up on what is considered a healthy and wholesome food. Self-service machines may be found at

farmers markets and small farms as well as in shopping centers and near schools and playgrounds. In addition to England, raw milk is available via vending machines in a number of countries, including:²

Austria	Croatia	Czech Republic
Denmark	France	Germany
Greece	Ireland	Lithuania
Netherlands	Poland	Romania
Serbia	Slovakia	

In a report written for A Campaign for Real Milk, licensed nutritionist Sylvia Onusic, Ph.D., noted upon her first encounter with a raw milk vending machine in Slovenia that “The major focus was on safety of the milk and maintenance of hygienic conditions before and after dispensing it.”³

After paying for the milk, the machine dispenses it into a container of choice (which can be purchased on-site or provided by the consumer). An ultraviolet light then sanitizes the surface. As for potential machine malfunctions, farmers are connected to the units via a real-time cellphone app, which sends out an alert if there’s a temperature change and even lets farmers check into the machine’s status at any time.

Inspectors are also given key cards so they can access the machines. According to Onusic, “There have been no confirmed reports of illness caused by the raw milk purchased at these machines from government officials or members of the public.” As of 2015, she reports, the raw milk vending machine market was \$6.45 million in Europe alone, which is expected to climb to nearly \$18 million by 2024.⁴

Could Raw Milk Vending Machines Come to the US?

Onusic actually pondered bringing a raw milk vending machine to the U.S., but quickly realized such an idea wouldn’t fly, even in her home state of Pennsylvania, where raw milk sales are legal. She noted:⁵

“[T]he Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture strongly discouraged me from embarking on such an enterprise. A female veterinarian who worked at the Agriculture Department told me it would be a grueling bureaucratic process and said that they would never approve vending machines because there was no way to police them.

Even after I explained how farmers could track their machines via a special iPhone app and stated that inspectors could gain access to the machine at any time with an entry key, the idea seemed unfathomable to her.”

Ironically, while selling raw milk from a vending machine is considered virtually sacrilegious, farmers could, if they so desired, sell pasteurized milk and milk powder products from vending machines, including those packed with added sugars (not much different from vending machines selling soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages).

It's not entirely surprising, considering raw milk is considered to be a public health enemy in the U.S., unlike in much of Europe, where it's considered essential to such delicacies as [traditional French cheese](#). Pennsylvania cheesemaker Sue Miller explained to Mother Nature Network:⁶

"There are all these great enzymes living in the milk when it's raw that create flavor profiles. When milk is pasteurized, they get extinguished so you have to add cultures to accentuate the flavors of the milk ..."

"I'd love for people to really try raw milk cheese. In Europe people don't want pasteurized cheese. They know how good raw milk cheese is."

Even the royal family demands raw milk. According to The Globe and Mail, "Queen Elizabeth drinks her milk raw. She reportedly thinks so highly of [unpasteurized milk](#) that, when her grandsons Princes William and Harry were students at Eton, she instructed herdsman Adrian Tomlinson to bottle up raw milk from her Windsor herd and deliver it to them at school."^{7,8}

There Are Benefits to Raw Milk

High-quality raw milk comes from cows raised on pasture, not those raised in [concentrated animal feeding operations \(CAFOs\)](#), where milk can be produced in filthy conditions, then heated until all the pathogens are gone.

Never mind that, along with killing "germs," pasteurization kills off beneficial organisms in the milk, including bacteria and enzymes, and prevents natural souring (while naturally soured milk can still be consumed, pasteurized milk past its prime will quickly go bad).⁹ Raw milk is smooth and creamy, with a flavor profile that matches the cows' diet.

However, it isn't flavor alone that keeps many people coming back for more — it's the health benefits. Children who drink raw milk have a lower risk of developing allergies and asthma, for instance.¹⁰ And early human studies suggested raw milk was superior to pasteurized milk in protecting against infection, diarrhea, rickets, tooth decay and tuberculosis.¹¹

Raw milk also contains protective components that aren't found in pasteurized milk, including antibodies and beneficial bacteria that help to kill pathogens in the milk, as well as compounds that prevent pathogen absorption across the intestinal wall. There are a variety of immune-strengthening components in raw milk as well, including lymphocytes, immunoglobulins and growth factors.¹²

Raw milk is also a great source of fat-soluble vitamins, including A, D and K2. In fact, milk from cows raised primarily on pasture, which includes high-quality raw milk, has been shown to be higher in many nutrients, including vitamin E and beta-carotene and the [healthy fats omega-3](#) and [conjugated linoleic acid \(CLA\)](#).¹³

This is a significant benefit, as CLA is associated with a lower risk of cancer and [heart disease](#) and optimized cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, [raw milk](#), which has a naturally desirable thick texture, does not contain thickening agents that are found in many low-fat dairy products, nor is it subjected to homogenization, which pasteurized milk goes through to break down fat particles, oxidizing them in the process.

Why Are We Punishing Farmers in North America?

In stark contrast, while many Europeans are free to enjoy a glass of crisp raw milk anytime they like courtesy of self-serve vending machines, in North America selling raw milk is often forbidden. In Canada, for instance, it's illegal to sell or give away raw milk, a law that's enforced in many provinces.

In Ontario, distributing raw milk was long considered to be a regulatory offense punishable by fines, but as of January 2018 an order issued by Ontario's Superior Court ruled that anyone who distributes or sells raw milk in the area can face [years in prison](#).

Many raw milk enthusiasts believe the Ontario injunction violates their constitutional right to access raw milk and have, along with other raw milk co-op members, filed a motion to have the injunction stayed.

It's a similar story in the U.S., where efforts continue to expand access to raw milk — the only food banned from interstate commerce — and, in so doing, protect people's right to eat and drink what they please.

You might remember that at one time all milk was “raw,” as pasteurization did not yet exist. This 19th-century invention is touted as crucial in making milk safe, but what it's actually done is allow for the proliferation of the “dirty dairy” industry, aka milk that comes from CAFOs.

Raw Milk Farmers Unfairly Targeted

In areas where it's illegal to sell raw milk, those who want to enjoy raw milk products sometimes form a farm share, in which each member owns a piece of a cow and can therefore legally enjoy its milk.

In Canada, the government eradicated this loophole, however, and many raw milk farmers have been harassed, raided, fined and driven out of business as a result. One such farmer, Michael Ilgert of Ontario, had about 60 customers who purchased his raw milk

regularly, a mix of people allergic to pasteurized milk (but who had no trouble drinking raw milk), immigrants used to drinking raw milk and those looking for organic and locally produced food.

Undercover inspectors purchased some raw milk from his farm, however, which ended up with him being charged with five crimes in 2017. Rather than risking jail time, he shut down his operation, pleaded guilty to three offenses and paid \$1,500 in fines.

As noted by the Ottawa Citizen, “There is no guarantee, he points out, that mass produced food is safer. He says more people have died from contaminated romaine lettuce than from raw milk in the past 45 years. ‘Why are we being targeted?’”¹⁴

It’s a serious double standard, too, since while dairy farmers can’t sell or distribute raw milk, they’re free to drink it themselves (and about 80 percent of dairy farmers do).¹⁵ Meanwhile, you’re far more likely to become ill from foodborne illness linked to other foods than you are from raw milk. According to Dr. Ted Beals, a retired physician and pathologist with a personal interest in dairy testing and safety of milk:¹⁶

“From the perspective of a national public health professional looking at an estimated total of 48 million foodborne illnesses each year; or from the perspective of a health care professional looking at a total of 90,771 ... confirmed bacterial foodborne infections each year (about 0.2 percent) ...

... [T]here is no rational justification to focus national attention on raw milk, which may be associated with an average of 42 illnesses maximum among the more than 9 million people (about 0.0005 percent) who have chosen to drink milk in its fresh unprocessed form.

Using this average of 42 illnesses per year, we can show, using government figures, that you are about 35,000 times more likely to become ill from other foods than you are from raw milk.”

Who Should Decide What Food You Can Eat?

Ultimately, the choice of what to eat should belong to the individual consumer, not the state or federal government. If government agencies are allowed to impose their view of "safe food" on consumers, and dictate what’s legal and what’s not, raw milk won’t be the only thing lost — one day virtually all food could be pasteurized, irradiated and/or genetically engineered.

Still, as with all foods, source matters, and this is just as true with raw milk as any other food. If you’re interested in raw milk, here are tips for finding [high-quality raw milk sources](#):

Does the farmer and his family drink the milk themselves?

Does the farmer test his milk for pathogens, and can he prove that his product has a low pathogenic population?

<p>Are the cows fed with natural grass on a pasture? If not, what are they feeding the cows?</p>	<p>How long has the farmer been in business producing raw milk?</p>
<p>What conditions are the cows raised in? Do they look healthy?</p>	<p>Is the farm accredited with sanitation standards? In a related note, does the farm have a history of sanitation problems?</p>
<p>Is the milk quickly chilled after collecting?</p>	<p>Are cows given antibiotics and growth hormones? (Remember, organic standards do not allow this practice.)</p>

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