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An Unhealthy Drink in Disguise

When consumers think of orange juice, they think of a healthy drink, something not to feel guilty about drinking. Unfortunately, orange juice is not as healthy as consumers think, making it an extremely controversial beverage because many consumers view it as a healthier alternative to sodas and caffeinated drinks. Orange juice is actually an unhealthy beverage due to its low vitamin C levels, high sugar levels, and unnatural processing.

The low vitamin C levels in orange juice make it an unhealthy beverage. In actuality, an orange has some of the lowest levels of vitamin C (Heyne). For example, a serving size of Tropicana orange juice has only 75-90 mg of vitamin C, whereas an equivalent serving size of vegetables with less sugar such as kale has 80 mg of vitamin C, broccoli has 100 mg, and red bell peppers have 190 mg (Heyne). Sweeter, less sugary fruit alternatives include papayas at 84 mg, pineapples at 103 mg, mangos at 122 mg, and kiwis at 137 mg (Heyne). Consumers are being led to believe that orange juice is a main source of vitamin C because manufacturers simply place a sticker touting its vitamin C content on the label.

High sugar levels also contribute to the unhealthy nature of orange juice. Tropicana Pure Premium orange juice contains 22 grams of sugar per 8-ounce glass, Juicy Juice has 26 grams of sugar in an 8-ounce glass, and Minute Maid has 32 grams of sugar per 10-ounce bottle (Wilson). According to American obesity expert Robert Lustig, author of *Fat Chance: The Bitter Truth About Sugar*, “Calorie for calorie, 100 percent orange juice is worse for [an individual] than sugary sodas” (qtd. in Wilson). Consumption of sugary fruit juices has doubled in the past 30 years (*The Telegraph*). In a book from the 1920s on feeding children, L. Emmett Holt reports that parents should give toddlers just one to four tablespoons (15-60 ml) of fresh orange or peach juice daily compared with today’s 200 ml found in children’s juice boxes, which contain about 17 mg of sugar (Wilson). Consumers cannot consider orange juice healthy when it contains such high levels of sugar.

In addition, the way by which orange juice is processed relates to another controversial aspect of the beverage. Orange juice manufacturers claim their products are “natural,” “made with 100% fruit,” and “freshly squeezed”; however, consumers will discover that all of those terms are misleading. In reality, orange juice is processed by being “frozen not from concentrate,” essentially a process by which manufacturers remove all of the oxygen from the juice in order for it to last longer and be available all year long (“The Sad Truth”). When the oxygen is removed from the orange juice, so is the flavor. Therefore, manufacturers have to make their own “orange” flavor by hiring flavor and even fragrance companies such as Dior to make the juice taste and smell like real juice (Polis). This process is why orange juice never really tastes the same as when it is squeezed out of an orange, and it is also the reason why different brands of orange juice have different tastes to them (“The Sad Truth”). Unfortunately, “pasteurized, stored-long-term, re-flavored, not-from-concentrate orange juice is in,” says Alisa Hamilton in her 2010 book *Squeezed* (qtd. in “The Sad Truth”).

Each morning, consumers drink a glass of orange juice with their breakfasts, believing that they are beginning the day with a healthy beverage. They assume that it is a good source of vitamin C, is low in sugar, and is processed naturally. However, the exact opposite is true.

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