



Do you have the guts to drink your untreated lake water?
 Maybe, but Zim has a few words of advice

The fever is catching

By David Zimmer

“LAST YEAR I SPENT A LOT OF MONEY on a whole-house filtration system to treat the lake water at my cottage. Now I keep hearing about the alleged health benefits of drinking ‘raw water.’ Is there any truth to this? (If you answer yes, someone owes me \$2,000.)”

For cottagers unfamiliar with the concept, “raw water” is a Silicon Valley health trend that embraces the drinking of unfiltered, unpurified, unprocessed water. Proponents feel that raw water is healthier than the everyday water we drink because it still contains all the natural “energy,” minerals, and probiotics that are removed when water is filtered or purified. It’s a little like water that came from a hole in the ground or got scooped from your cottage lake. But certain people are willing to pay almost \$40 for 10 litres of the stuff. I ask you: where were these health-conscious consumers when I launched my line of Dirt-Snacker Patties made with organic dirt? >>

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Let's keep things in perspective. In addition to this raw-water movement—and a pestilence of black turtleneck sweaters—remember that Silicon Valley has also given us a fasting diet, an all-fat diet, and something called Soylent, a liquid or powder that precludes the need for eating food altogether. So it's safe to say the people there are at the cutting edge of something or other. When it comes to drinking raw water, they are at the cutting edge of diarrhea, because along with so-called probiotics, untreated water commonly contains bad-ass-biotics, like bacteria that can cause dysentery, typhoid fever, and cholera. Or protozoa like cryptosporidium and giardia, bringer of Canada's patriotic gut ailment—beaver fever. Depending on its source, you might find other bonus material in raw water: pesticides, viruses, cyanotoxins, salmonella, campylobacter, and maybe even a touch of the old hepatitis.

In my opinion, it's pretty clear these Silicon Valley health freaks are loony. Bonkers. Batty. Nutty as a fair-trade fruitcake. Because you'd have to be completely gaga to willingly drink untreated surface water, right? What reasonable person would do such a thing? The answer, I'm sad to say, is generation after generation of otherwise sane cottagers who routinely drink untreated lake water. It sounds impossible, I know, but how many times have you heard someone boast about the pristine beauty of their cottage 'hood and how the water is so pure you can drink right out of the lake? I regularly meet cottagers who have done so for years and are proud of it.

Sure, you can drink lake water. We've all done it. But even the purest water, fed by glacial streams, will ruin your month if there is the merest pinch of beaver poop in there (though human, canine, and muskrat poop will also do the trick). And that's just for giardia. You might be able to drink 10 or 20 or 100 cups of water from your lake, only to have your very next sip plant the seed for some very unpleasant times ahead. It's a crapshoot.

I come by my interest in the subject honestly, having had the unforgettable experience of contracting giardiasis, a.k.a.

beaver fever, on a Yukon canoe trip. Yes, the water was icy and pristine, and, yes, we treated it with chlorine dioxide drops. Nevertheless, destiny called, whether from an accidental gulp while swimming or as cross-contamination from another giardiated paddler who didn't wash their hands before meal prep. Who knows? The nice thing about beaver fever is that it usually takes a week or two to colonize your gut, so if you are lucky, it won't kick in while you're living in a tent. In my case, the vomiting stopped after about 36 hours, so I could concentrate on the main event, which I will leave to your imagination, especially if you can imagine something that is the colour of a leprechaun's hat and that continues ceaselessly for days. You cannot risk sleep. Not even a nap. Anyone who has suffered through a bout of beaver fever creates their own personal style. Some sit on the thunder throne for a week. Others purchase underwear by the hundred-pack on eBay. I adopted a hybrid approach, but once I was prescribed the correct antibiotic, my symptoms cleared up quickly. Maybe those raw-water people have a point about health benefits, because I lost a good 20 lbs in just six days. With absolutely no dieting or exercise.

So please rest assured that spending money on a water-treatment system for your cottage was a wise choice. Not only will you avoid the bowel-tormenting health perils enumerated here, but you also won't have to tote water back and forth or pay for jugs of the stuff (treated by somebody else's system). If you encounter naysayers, challenge them to a little contest. All you have to do is plan a weekend where you drink only the water from your new treatment system. Your opponent must only drink raw water, straight from the lake, preferably from a weedy back bay that looks good for duck hunting. The rest is easy. Just wait for a week or two, and it will be quite apparent who has won. (It will be you.) Here's the good part: when your opponent is back on solid food, in the name of good sportsmanship I will personally deliver a 12-pack sampler of my signature Dirt-Snacker Patties (made with organic dirt) for them to enjoy. Because, like somebody once said, there's a sucker born every minute. 🐾

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The cottage biffy built for two: genius solution or disgusting mistake? Zim tells the hole story

It's a double standard

By David Zimmer

“WE HAVE A TWO-SEATER OUTHOUSE. Legend has it that my grandpa built it when he was drunk. I don’t get it. Were there—or are there—benefits to a multi-seat outhouse?”

This type of query just begs for another clever rhetorical question, like “Is the Pope Catholic?” or “Does the Prime Minister enjoy a costume party?” Of course there are benefits to a multi-hole privy, beginning with the obvious rewards for having any type of outhouse at a cottage, no matter how many parking spots it has on the bench. Even if you don’t use it much, an outhouse is a gold-plated asset, requiring neither electricity nor running water to function flawlessly, and never needing to be drained or winterized. Even the most basic biffy can take pressure off an overtaxed septic when it is assaulted by a family reunion or, joy of joys, a fairy-tale cottage wedding. Is your water pump on the fritz? The backhouse has your back. Want to come up for a quick winter weekend? The kybo might be cold, but it’s always open for business.

At my cottage, given the choice between a perfectly functioning indoor composting toilet or an outdoor outhouse, I always take the outhouse option, if only for the better view. So I guess you could say I am a biffy booster. But before we address the

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multi-holed crux of your question, let's talk about your grandfather, whom I believe you have libelled. I have serious doubts that your grandpa built your earth closet with twin depositories "when he was drunk," as you maintain, because building even a simple dunny requires back-breaking labour to dig the hole and intermediate carpentry skills to frame the structure. Think about it. When was the last time you got sauced and decided to perform a really difficult task? Sure, most of us have done something really stupid when half in the bag, like learning to barefoot ski or free-climbing a giant hemlock, but I have never once met a drunken cottager who would attempt physically demanding and productive work. In my experience, which is considerable, tipsy cottagers gravitate toward easier projects, like rigging a super-dangerous rope swing over the lake or building a cockeyed badminton court with clothesline and a bunch of tent pegs.

No, I don't think your grandpa was whistled when he built your loo. So that leaves two possible explanations for the twin-hole configuration. First, there is the remote possibility that Gramps suffered from a serious case of double vision, but unless all your double doors have two handles on each side, and there are two stoves and two fridges in both your kitchens, I suspect this line of thinking might be off the mark. What's more likely is that your grandpa built the outhouse with two holes because he was a grandpa-aged man, and that's how things were done back in the day. Pit latrines were commonly used anywhere that lacked a septic system or a sanitary sewer, like most rural or wilderness areas. And prior to widespread sewage treatment, outhouses were used everywhere, even in big cities.

My point is that in days of yore, when everybody used an outhouse every day (and surely more than once every 24 hours), there had to be some accommodation given for volume and frequency. So it was not uncommon for places like hotels, schools, and resorts to have high-capacity commodes—some of them two-storeys tall—with up to a dozen holes.

Of course this sounds absolutely disgusting, but if the communal convenience is the only game in town, what's the alternative? When ya gotta go, ya gotta go. And it may help explain why we still huddle shoulder to shoulder in public restrooms, separated only by a flimsy sheet-metal cubicle wall, to stare at our neighbour's feet and wonder, How much did he pay for those boots?

But your grandpa's double-barrelled thunder box was probably inspired more by a family-style comfort station of days gone by, where having two or three holes was more about obliging different-sized bottoms of men, women, and children. You've got to remember that those were the days before the widespread use of the standardized toilet seat as we know it (or maybe folks just couldn't afford them), so the hole cut in the bench was one's only support. Including some smaller holes for smaller people made sense, especially if you can imagine trying to rescue a screaming two-year-old from the depths of a well-used pit latrine, an area known, according to outhouse expert Max Burns, as "the dungeon of dung."

Another possible benefit to having multiple holes is the ability to "spread the joy" around the bottom of the pit by rotating between holes over a period of time. Case in point: my own cottage latrine pit is wide enough to accommodate three holes, but has only one seat of honour in the middle. This necessitates the occasional employment of the dreaded Poo Stick, an eight-foot-long tool used to even out the pile. It's especially important in winter, when the ever-growing stalagmite of frozen dung gets too high.

Your grandpa was clearly a man of vision, and you should use his little brown shack out back as much as you can. Rotate between seats to see if you are right or left dominant. Or enjoy your little house with a friend (Best Outhouse Friends Forever!). One thing is for certain: if your grandpa is alive and well, you must give him a big hug and call him a genius. If he is at eternal rest, send a silent prayer to say thanks for his amazing double-wide gift, one hole better than most outhouse-owning cottagers possess, and two holes ahead of everybody else. 🐾

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We're replacing salty strips of porktacular goodness with terrible imitations and absurd spinoffs, says Zim

Nobody puts bacon in a corner

By David Zimmer

"I WAS RECENTLY GIVEN SOME BACON DENTAL FLOSS as part of a birthday gift. My first question was, Who the hell gives dental floss as a gift? But my second question was, Do we need all this bacon-ness in the world? Has bacon gone too far?"

By my estimation, the kind of people who give bacon-flavoured dental floss have problems, beginning with a basic misunderstanding of oral hygiene. It's very simple: when we clean our teeth and gums, the idea is to remove all the little bits of mushed-up food and God-knows-what and replace them with a clean mouth landscape, preferably minty-fresh. Bacon-flavoured floss is a terrible idea because after going through all the work to remove the vestigial guck of our daily chewing, no one wants to be left with the taste of food they didn't actually eat. That's why Stilton mouthwash and whitening strips that taste like Miracle Whip have yet to be invented. It's a sad fact, but people who would give dental floss of any kind as a gift are tone deaf to the established rhythms and rituals of our society. They are the very same creatures of my childhood Halloweens, the ones who thought it would be a good idea to hand out toothbrushes instead of candy, chips, and chocolate bars. For their high-minded



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efforts, these folks were shunned by trick-or-treaters and often had their garage doors vandalized.

Now to the meat of the question. Do we need all this bacon-ness in the world? Absolutely not. Has bacon gone too far? No. Because bacon is the victim here. Like most foods beloved by cottagers, bacon has been around for a long time. Bacon is an old-fashioned product that is honest and delicious and so simple you can make it at home if you choose. It might get the cold shoulder from Canada's Food Guide, but bacon doesn't mind. Bacon knows it is loved and respected and has incalculable mojo.

The first attempts to siphon off some of bacon's juice came from those in the fake food movement, who were unable to muster up original names. By definition, bacon is made from pork. And while it is perfectly acceptable to observe a diet that is restricted by personal, moral, or religious beliefs, taking some salty strips of beef or turkey and calling them "bacon" is just wrong. It's a form of identity theft that diminishes the victim's good name and misleads the public. Case in point: bacon is delicious and tastes like bacon, while "beefacon" is not delicious at all, something I learned at a breakfast buffet in Malaysia. Vegetarians have also struggled with their naming, and it seems the same plagiarists who gave us veggie burgers and dogs cranked up the copycat machine to make "facon" and "vacon," which, as you have probably guessed, are salty strips of vegetable stuff. I have nothing against salty strips of vegetable stuff because they exactly define a potato chip. But why not make a new name? Leave bacon out of it.

Think of the outrage that would ensue if an inventor decided to sell baskets of peaches that were actually made from ground veal. Even if they were clearly labelled as "VealPeaches." I think people would be upset, especially if they missed the smaller label that says "Must be refrigerated. Cook to an internal temperature of 160°F." Disgusting, right? Terrible. Maybe criminal. But this is the sort of abuse bacon has been putting up with for years. And, yes, it has gone too far. As if fake bacon weren't bad enough, there

It might get the cold shoulder from Canada's Food Guide, but bacon doesn't mind. Bacon knows it is loved and respected and has incalculable mojo

is now a disturbing industry based on appropriating bacon's taste, smell, and likeness. I think it started in the 1990s when bacon held a bad-boy appeal for diet-conscious consumers. Bacon was a rebel. The fast-food industry cottoned on to this and soon spruced up its tired offerings with mountains of wretched rashers. Today, bacon saturation is upon us. Some creations, like bacon-flavoured ice cream, jam, vodka, lip balm, toothpaste, "baconnaise," and personal lubricant, you can consume. Other stuff, including bacon-themed condoms and bandage strips, as well as bacon-scented oils, candles, and pillows are just meant to be purchased and regretted forever.

Where will this madness end? One solution for the bacon problem could be trademark protection, the legal establishment of a Bacon™ image, content, and likeness that could be employed against makers of stuff like "Magic Vegan Bacon Grease." Think about it; if both Interpol and the FBI can get their shorts in a knot over an illegal download of *Transformers: The Last Knight*, surely it's possible to muster up some legal firepower to protect one of the world's best foods. I think the lawyers should start by tearing a strip off the turkey bacon people, because they have to start somewhere, and turkey bacon is scary bad. Baconnaise should be next, because it ruins two things at the same time. Ditto for bacon ice cream. And you have to admit it would be fun to send a letter to the manufacturers of bacon-flavoured *Mmmvelopes* in one of their own products. "Attention, stealer of Bacon™ mojo. You have been served. Wipe your mouth, then cease and desist." 🐷