

## Non-GMO beer? Label makes no sense

Recently, beer joined the ranks of food and beverage items with non-GMO verification from the Non-GMO Project. How could beer be genetically modified (GM) anyway? In Science 2.0, Hank Campbell disses the idea of a non-GM beer in his article, [Non-GMO Beer: For the anti-science hippie alcoholic in you](#), since “it never was in the first place.”

So what in evil beer of their competitors is genetically modified? The wheat, the hops, the barley? No, none of those things are genetically modified anyway. Maybe it is the yeast. Germany has a purity law (The Reinheitsgebot) which has not been updated since 1516 (1) – and every single product in every single beer they make would technically be incompatible in the modern interpretation because no product in any beer is the same as it was in 1516 – but yeast is the thing that anti-biology types worry has been genetically modified continuously since then. Yet yeast isn't even in beer, unless it is some intentional 'cloudy beer' effort, yeast is strained out before beer is pasteurized. To believe that changes the genetics of beer is like believing that your grandfather's diet made you fat or that third-hand smoke causes cancer.

Most beers are inherently non-GM because of the ingredients they're made from: typically water, wheat or barley, hops and yeast. In case you're trying to guess which of those organisms are the genetically modified ones, here's a reminder of the genetically modified crops that are currently being grown in the United States: Corn, soybean, canola, and cotton a.k.a. The Big Four, and alfalfa, squash and papayas. The only way to have GM beer is if it were brewed with corn, or had corn-based additives.

And “shockingly,” there are lots of beers that use corn, as the blogger [Food Babe](#) noted in a post. Usually if corn is used, it is used as an ‘adjunct,’ like a sidekick to barley or wheat. Not surprisingly, brewers do that to save money and Food Babe points that out in rather hysterical fashion.

... it is super cheap for a company to use corn instead of fruit or other non-GMO sources. With cheap beer – you are not just getting a cheap buzz, you are getting the worst of the worst. Just like with cheap fast food – if you don't invest in your beer – you will be drinking a lower quality product like Pabst Blue Ribbon that is made from GMO Corn and Corn Syrup.

Actually, corn beer could be brewed with non-GM corn, there's just no way to know. Much of the ‘ubiquitous nature’ of GMO food actually comes from corn-based additives like cornstarch and corn syrup, not that lots of different genetically engineered plants are being grown for consumption. And so it would probably be much easier to simply state that the beer does not contain corn, which is an actual food item, rather than slap on an ambiguous, polarizing and perhaps even misleading label.

**Additional Reading:**

- [“Beer and GMOs: What’s in your beer?”](#) Maureen Ogle | Genetic Literacy Project
- “Beverages and Genetic Engineering,” GMO Compass