

Viewpoint: The biggest threat to our food supply is not chemicals but chemophobia

My cousin is a baking whiz, and runs her own cookie enterprise. The recipes happen to call for potato flour. What's so controversial about that? Well, if heated to sufficient temperatures, it turns run of the mill potato starch into polyacrylamide, a known carcinogen.

Spuds a cancer risk? Say it ain't so. There was a huge media blow-up in the early 2000s over this very issue (actually any kind of potato based product, especially chips). Moms railed against it, and politicians ranted.

Indeed, like most controversies, after the facts were unveiled, the risks were decidedly overblown — and it fell into obscurity.

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An interesting tidbit that puts our risk obsession/aversion (no matter how inconsequential) in perspective is acrylamide's (polyacrylamide's building block) inclusion on California's Proposition 65 list.

You know, that infamous label that blindly calls anything and everything carcinogenic or teratogenic (causes birth defects) without any context about 1) how much is actually present, or 2) what it would take to make someone sick. It's just a declaration of presence, even if it's a measly molecule's worth.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)