

the RED CUP

Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q What is Absinthe and is it dangerous?

A. Absinthe, AKA, the “Green Fairy” due to its green color, is a high alcohol content (70% or 140 proof) anise flavored “liqueur” reportedly favored by 19th and 20th century bohemian artists and writers for its hallucinogenic properties. Thujone, a neuro-toxin contained in the wormwood oil of Absinthe, was said to have been responsible for the visions. However, no matter how many times you watch the movie *Eurotrip* or hear Johnny Depp tell you otherwise, there is no direct evidence that the amount of thujone in Absinthe actually causes hallucinations.

One of the conditions to lift the ban on Absinthe in 2007 by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau was that it contain only “trace” amounts of thujone (less than 10 parts per million). However, it is wise to note that pure wormwood oil is a poison that could harm or kill you. This should make you wary of consuming any home-brewed Absinthe while backpacking in the Pyrenees.

So if Absinthe only contains trace amounts of thujone, what makes it dangerous? One danger lies in the continued myth that Absinthe will make you high. But the truth is that Absinthe will make you no more euphoric than any other high proof alcohol beverage such as Bacardi 151 Rum (75.5%), Devil Springs Vodka (80%), or Everclear (95%). The road to unsafe inebriation comes quicker with such high alcohol content beverages.

Another danger unique to Absinthe is due to a secondary stimulant effect of some of the herbs in the beverage that cause the drinker to believe that they are less intoxicated than they truly are.

These factors create more concern for a less than enjoyable experience, as well as alcohol poisoning. The take home message is that all high proof alcohol beverages pose greater risks and you should be aware of alcohol content percentage before you drink.



wildfact

Calvin (of the cartoon strip *Calvin and Hobbes* fame) had a teacher named Ms. Wormwood.



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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