

SNAPSHOT

SARS in a can!

While shopping one evening at the local supermarket, I did a double take when I came across this startling item. Lethal viruses on sale to unsuspecting consumers!? As the product claims to be “premium quality” SARS, I am sure that if it actually did contain the SARS virus it would be enough to potentially kill thousands of people.

SARS in a can (aka sarsaparilla) is made from carbonated water, sugar, caramel, flavours, food acid and a preservative. Strangely enough, sales of this product actually increased in New Zealand during the SARS epidemic, with a BBC news website reporting that some people were asking, “Is this a medicine for SARS or protection against SARS?”¹ In another report, a New Zealand spokesman for the manufacturer said that the company was not thinking of changing the name of the drink and was unlikely to do so if current sales trends continued.² The company also used to sell Double SARS, but I understand that this product has been discontinued.

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1 BBC News. 10 things we didn't know this time last week. Available at: news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3050821.stm (accessed Sep 2004).

2 SARS boosts sales of soft drink labelled SARS, Xinhuanet, 21 May 2003. Available at: news.xinhuanet.com/english/2003-05/21/content_879849.htm (accessed Sep 2004). □

