

MEN'S JOURNAL

Yes, There's Propylene Glycol in Your Fireball

By [Gina DeMillo Wagner](#)

What to make of the Fireball Whisky recall.

Fireball Cinnamon Whisky claims to "taste like heaven," but its parent company, Sazerac, is feeling the burn after bottles of the famous 66-proof drink were yanked from shelves in Sweden, Norway, and Finland for containing too much of the potentially toxic chemical propylene glycol.

Sazerac says in a statement that there was a mix-up in shipments: "Unfortunately, Fireball shipped its North American formula to Europe and found that one ingredient is out of compliance with European regulations."

That ingredient is propylene glycol (PG), which is found in antifreeze and other industrial products. In much smaller quantities (deemed "food grade" or "pharmaceutical grade"), PG is used as a flavor additive and preservative in many drinks, sodas, snacks, ice cream, and cosmetic products.

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In the U.S., the additive is "generally recognized as safe" by the Food and Drug Administration at a concentration of up to 50 grams per kilogram. In Europe, however, the maximum use of the chemical is 3 grams per kilogram (The concern, according to a report by the European Medicines Agency, is that PG can cause liver, respiratory, and kidney dysfunction, especially in children or adults with existing liver or kidney issues). This is where the problem came for Sazerac. While their North American formula has some 6 grams of propylene glycol per kg in it, the European formula has less than one. The mix up effectively put an illegal amount of PG on the shelves for Europe.

"PG is a key part of the Fireball formula helping to deliver that great taste that so many folks enjoy," says Amy Preske, spokesperson for Sazerac. "It acts as a carrier and preserves the integrity of the flavor. We understand that very few flavors can be made without it."

Here's the rub: Whiskey isn't exactly a health food, and the prancing devil on the label of Fireball isn't promising to go easy on your liver. Is this another case of Europe having much stricter food standards than the U.S.? Preske, of course, says yes. "This was a technical compliance issue in Europe and does not represent any consumer health risk."

For now, Fireball is still available in North America and the company has no plans to change the recipe. The correct formula will be shipped to Europe and will be available again within three weeks, says Preske.