

# RED SHTICK MAGAZINE



**IRREVERENT VIEWS & SATIRICAL NEWS**

## **Cellulosic Ethanol: Tomorrow's Fuel for Drinking and Driving**

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**Topic:** Blinded by Science

*By Thomas Eldredge*

Everybody loves alcohol. It has helped us start and win wars, it's why we changed the constitution twice, and it just makes sense. It is the social lubricant that keeps the cynically self-righteous, moral fabric of our society from chafing against the swollen genitals of our collective guilt and denial. Alcohol is natural, legal, and moral, and you can drink it off of parts of sorority chicks.

The alcohol we know and love is composed mainly of ethanol, which, despite sharing a number of chemical similarities with deathanol, is widely accepted as pretty good stuff. Ethanol is a proverbial fuel for the service industry, violence, teen pregnancy, regular pregnancy, and gay pregnancy. It is also a real fuel for burning in things that run on real fuel. Ethanol is becoming well known as a potential clean, renewable source of energy.

Ethanol is created in a process known as fermentation, which you should know all about if you paid attention in any life science class you took since 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The raw materials needed to create ethanol are sugars, yeast, water, heat, and an inflatable pool filled with baby oil and aggressive women. The sugars used can be anything from those found in corn to those found in that box of sugar packets you stole from Starbucks, even though you buy coffee at Perks.

The sugars needed to create ethanol are found in the same crops we use for eating. For hundreds of years, human beings have used a variety of crops to produce enough alcohol to get hammered and still have enough left over to put food on the table...unless there wasn't enough to put food on the table, in which case, we just fermented what we had and got hammered anyway.

With the prevailing winds of government mismanagement and corruption, we simply cannot grow enough crops to satisfy the demands of eating, drinking, and driving. To make ethanol a viable fuel source, we will need to find new raw materials from which to brew it.

The solution that has lingered on the horizon for decades has always been the prospect of cellulosic ethanol. Cellulose is basically what gets plants hard; it is chemically equivalent to plant Viagra<sup>®</sup>. Cellulose is a long chain of tightly bound molecules that contains a great deal of energy. When this energy is released in reactions such as fire, the effect is what we have come to know as "fire." Fire is the initial discovery that allowed humankind to dominate predators, nature, disagreeable people, and weaker fires.

Cellulose can be broken down into digestible sugars, which can then be fermented into ethanol. With current technology, breaking down cellulose is a difficult process, requiring expensive Oompa Loompa labor negotiations. Scientists are busy engineering new enzymes that will bypass the need for fictional labor entirely. If cellulose could be broken down cheaply and efficiently, we could create fuel from nearly any source of plant biomass, including the troublesome Oompa Loompas.

What? You didn't know the Oompa genus is in the Embryophyte Subkingdom? Check your 5<sup>th</sup>-grade life science textbook.

Funding for research into cellulosic ethanol production has grown exponentially in the last few years. Funding has increased because we recently found our gonads wedged snugly between Iraq and the hard place we call the President's head. Our elected legislators have heard the cry for cheap, clean, domestically renewable energy, and they have responded by spending our tax dollars on incentives to make companies spend a little money on stuff that makes us feel a little better about our insatiable addiction to foreign oil.

Cellulose-related research has been conducted in some form since the oil crisis of the 1970s. For a brief period, cellulosic ethanol was seen as a long-term solution to foreign oil dependence, lingering just beyond the horizon.

We learned from that critical time in history. Our leaders are adjusting the way they stay the course in order to address the emerging energy crisis. We learned that having a long-term solution lingering just beyond the horizon allows us to feel good enough to wait for oil prices to drop and things to get back to normal.

Cellulose research is, in itself, a solution, because it gives us a good excuse to discuss what we could do if we really cared about finding a solution. If we talk long enough, the problem will have gone away, and we will again have cheap, anonymous sources of blood-soaked oil to refine into cheap, taxable gasoline. That's what happened in the 70s; that's what is happening now.

Cellulosic ethanol research may or may not continue after we win the war on terror and secure enough oil to shut up and get back to some serious NASCAR. Without a need for renewable, clean fuels, we may find it's better to leave cellulosic ethanol simmering on the back burner, in case we need a distraction next time we face a cataclysmic hiccup in the energy market. If research continues, it will be primarily relegated to pot-smoking, environmentalist kooks.

Should cellulose ever become a viable source of ethanol, its primary application will most

likely be to convert wood shavings into a tasteless, 190-proof liquor, which can then be sold to university Greeks for use in body shots and hazing by ritual self-immolation.

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