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*Point of View*  
 by **DAVE BARRY**

**Winning the war on drugs**

Recently, I had a simple, foolproof idea for eliminating the drug problem in this country. It came to me while I was making spaghetti sauce.

I use an ancient Italian spaghetti sauce recipe that has been handed down through many generations of ancient Italians, as follows:

1. Buy some spaghetti sauce.
2. Heat it up.

Sometimes I add some seasoning to the sauce, to give it a dash of what the Italians call *joie de vivre* (literally, ingredients). I had purchased, from the supermarket spice section, a small plastic container labeled "Italian Seasoning." My plan was to open this container and sprinkle some seasoning into the sauce.

Already I can hear you veteran consumers out there chortling in a good-natured amusement.

"You complete moron," you are chortling. "You actually thought you could gain access to a product protected by modern packaging?"

Yes, I did, and I certainly learned my lesson. Because it turns out that Italian seasoning has joined the growing number of products that, For Your Protection, are packaged in containers that you cannot open unless you own a home laser cannon.

This trend started with aspirin. Years ago — ask your grandparents — aspirin was sold in bottles that had removable caps. That system was changed when consumer-safety authorities discovered that certain consumers were taking advantage of this loophole by opening up the bottles and — it only takes a few "bad apples" to spoil things for everybody — ingesting aspirin tablets.

So now aspirin bottles behave very much like stinging insects in nature movies, defending themselves against consumer access via a multilevel security system:

1. There is a plastic wrapper to keep you from getting at the cap.
2. The cap, which is patented by the Rubik's Cube company, cannot be removed unless you line an invisible arrow up with an invisible dot while rotating the cap counterclockwise and simultaneously pushing down and pulling up.

3. In the unlikely event that you get the cap off, the top of the bottle is blocked by a taut piece of extremely feisty foil made from the same impenetrable material used to protect the Space Shuttle during atmospheric re-entry.

4. Underneath the foil is a virtually unremovable wad of cotton the size of a small sheep.

5. As a final precaution, there is no actual aspirin underneath the cotton.



There is only a piece of paper listing dangerous side effects, underneath which is ...

6. ... a second piece of paper warning you that the first piece of paper could give you a paper cut.

Even this may not be enough security for the aspirin of tomorrow. At this very moment, packaging scientists are working on an even more secure system, in which the entire aspirin container would be located inside a live sea urchin.

With aspirin leading the way, more and more products are coming out in fiercely protective packaging designed to prevent consumers from consuming them. My Italian seasoning container featured a foil seal and a fiendish plastic thing that I could not remove with my bare hands, which meant, of course, that I had to use my teeth. These days, you have to open almost every consumer item by gnawing on the packaging. Go to any typical consumer household and you'll note most of the products — food, medicine, compact discs, appliances, furniture — are covered with bite marks, as though the house is infested with crazed beavers. The floor will be gritty with little chips of consumer teeth. Many consumers are also getting good results by stabbing their products with knives. I would estimate that 58 percent of all serious household accidents result from consumers assaulting packaging designed to improve consumer safety.

Anyway, I finally gnawed my seasoning container open, no doubt activating a tiny transmitter that triggered an alarm in some Spice Security Command Post (WHEEP! WHEEP! WHEEP! INTRUDER GAINING ACCESS TO ITALIAN SEASONING IN SECTOR 19!). While I was stirring my spaghetti sauce, it occurred to me that if we want to eliminate the drug problem in this country, all we have to do is:

1. Make all drugs completely legal

and allow them to be sold in supermarkets ("Crack? Aisle 6, next to the Sweet 'n Low.").

2. Require that the drugs be sold in standard consumer packaging.

My reasoning is that if physically fit, clear-headed consumers can't get into these packages, there's no way that strung-out junkies could. Eventually, they would give up trying to get at their drugs and become useful members of society, or at least attorneys.

I realize that some of you may have questions about this plan. Your most likely concern is: "If dangerous and highly addictive narcotics are sold freely in supermarkets, will the packages be required to have Nutritional Facts labels, like the ones that now helpfully inform consumers of the protein, carbohydrate, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron content of products such as Cool Whip Lite?"

Of course they will. Even though, if my plan works as expected, an addict would be unable to consume his heroin purchase, he still has a vital right to know, as an American consumer, that if he did consume it, he'd be getting only a small percentage of his Minimum Daily Requirement of dietary fiber. This is just one of the many benefits we enjoy as residents of this Consumer Paradise. My head aches with pride.

