

# A toast from Alyn Smith MEP

✉ by Alyn Smith MEP

Tis the season us Scots, including myself, love a few festive drams! Edinburgh's bars and clubs will be packed over Christmas and New Year

with merry Scots. However, most of us are left out in the cold when it comes to knowing what's in our drink.

They say that 'you are what you eat' but new research suggests that you may also be what you drink. Did you know that seven Bacardi Breezers is equivalent to six Mars Bars, while six pints of lager can contain as many calories as three Big Macs? I can hear audible gasps of dismay! Most Scots remain totally unaware of just how many calories they are consuming by drinking their favourite tippie. The drinks industry is keeping Scots consumers in the dark and hiding these facts and figures for a reason. If youngsters knew that seven alcopops was equivalent to six Mars Bars then they may just think twice.

I have called upon the European Commission to pressure alcohol manufacturers across the EU to fall into line with other drinks products

and provide full nutritional information on their products. The European Parliament has also recently passed new legislation bringing all food and non-alcoholic drinks into the nutritional labelling rules, yet alcohol was exempt. I wrote to various drink companies urging them to label the amount of calories on drinks so consumers are clued up on how many calories they are digesting through drink. I had the backing of various focus groups.

Dr Evelyn Gillan, Chief Executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland said: -"Alcohol Focus Scotland believes that there should be mandatory health

and unit information on labels including calorific information. Alcohol is 'no ordinary commodity' and as such the general public needs to be aware of the risks to health from excessive consumption. To include unit and calorie information on labels of alcoholic products makes sense."

When I posted a comparison table on my [Facebook](#) page showing how many Mars Bars are in drinks, people were genuinely shocked and all were in favour of calorie labelling. I'm not saying people shouldn't drink but I do think consumers have the right to know what it is in their drink, just like they know what is in their food. If we are looking to change our cultural behaviour towards alcohol then having access to the real information on just what we are tipping down our necks may just shock and surprise figure-conscious Scots. The European Parliament has obliged all food and non-alcoholic drinks makers to sharpen up their act, now the drinks industry must be compelled to do the same. If Irn Bru has to do this then there is no reason why Tennents should not be doing the same. So please raise your glass to calorie labelling!

Alyn Smith SNP is Scotland's youngest MEP and you can keep up to date with his activities on [Facebook](#)