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## **What's new in the Grapevine this week?**

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## **Red Wine and Your Weight Loss Resolutions**

How many of us made the New Year's resolution to shed a few pounds? I have some good news and bad news as far as red wine is concerned. In spite of a recent (and highly misinterpreted) report, a glass of red wine does NOT have the same effect as a one hour work out. The study in question never makes that exercise claim. The study only showed that resveratrol (a procyanidin in red wine) had a beneficial cardiovascular effect on exercise trained rats. For humans to get the same dosage from red wine would require consumption of hundreds of bottles a day. Even I know that doesn't translate to a lot of gym time.

Red wine contains alcohol, a concentrated source of energy that provides 7 calories per gram. By comparison, you'll get 4 calories from a gram of protein or a gram of carbohydrates, and about 9 calories from a gram of fat. Like many other people I forget to compensate for wine calories at dinner. Wine calories are "additive" which means I don't consume fewer calories just because there is a glass of wine on the table with dinner. To lose weight when wine is a regular part of your diet, you have to compensate for its calories. Instead, drinking wine or any other alcohol with a meal makes me more likely to passively increase in my total caloric intake, which, can work against weight loss. As you can see, I have anorexia well under control.

Although red wine won't necessarily do you any favors when it comes to weight loss, it might be able to help you maintain a healthy body weight long-term. An eight-year study of more than 19,000 middle-aged women published in the Archives of Internal Medicine in 2010 concluded that normal-weight women who drink a moderate amount of alcohol, such as a glass of red wine a day, are less likely to become overweight or obese as they age than women who don't drink. Similarly, scientists who followed nearly 16,000 middle-aged women in a seven-year prospective cohort study for the Women's Health Initiative concluded in 2012 that women who drink moderately are more likely to maintain a healthy weight as they age than nondrinkers. The study's authors went even further, noting that wine protects against weight gain more effectively than liquor or beer.

A study in The Journal of Biological Chemistry reported by Women's Health Magazine found that piceatannol, a chemical naturally found in red grapes, berries, peanuts, passion fruit and **red wine** may help prevent the growth of new fat cells. Researchers still don't know what quantity of piceatannol-containing foods you need to eat to help you maintain a healthy weight, but incorporating more of them into your diet can't hurt. Your body will thank you a lot.

Red wine has so many other health benefits that it would be silly to eliminate it entirely from your diet. A glass or so a day contributes to a healthy life style. Just remember to cut down on sugary or salty snacks and stay with a diet high in fruits and vegetable and low in saturated fat. Hey, grapes are fruit, right?



## Food for thought

Almost every week someone comes into the store muttering apologies about what kind of wine they like. ("I'm the only one who likes sweet wines", "Sorry, I just prefer California Zinfandel", "I love Italian reds, is that OK?", "Where is your dry Rose' Section?", and "I must be an oddball, but I don't care for Pinot Noir"). It almost seems like there is something to be ashamed of if one's tastes don't conform to a national average. It seldom reassures our customers that an honest reporting of one's specific taste is not something to be embarrassed about any more than reporting one's shoe size. If we know what you like, we can find the wine for you.

Our job is not to judge whether oaky Chardonnay is better than stainless steel aged Chardonnay or if Moscato is better than Champagne. It is not our place to tell you what your tastes should be or to cheer or sneer at those preferences. Our job is to match your taste buds to wines that appeal to you.

Mark Twain said it best: "There are no standards of taste in wine, cigars, poetry, prose, etc. Each person's own taste is the standard, and a majority vote cannot decide for him or in any slightest degree affect the supremacy of his own standard."

## Higher alcohol wines

Recently, a very good customer brought in some wines that had been stored for the last forty years in hopes that they would be great by now. (Alas, the 1969 vintage of Pinot Noir from California is way, way, way past its prime.) However, it was interesting to look at the labels from 40 years ago and note some differences. There is no government safety warning, no sulfite warning and the appellation information is a bit hazy.

What really stood out was all four of the wines that my good customer brought in showed alcohol levels from 12 to 12.5%.

Nowadays, it is very common to find all kinds of wines, red and white, with alcohol levels up in the 14 percent range and higher, and some red Zinfandels and Australian Shiraz' occasionally straying above 16 percent. Not that long ago, 13.0 % was considered high. Canoe Ridge from Washington State came out last year with a Gewürztraminer (!) that hit 15% alcohol. While the 1969 Pinot Noir had just 12% alcohol, we have several Pinots from California from recent vintages that boast up to 15.3% alcohol.

You might say, "Hey, what's the problem? More bang for the buck, right?"

Before I answer that, a little refresher on wine production:

All fruits begin with almost all acid and no sugar. (Green apples are tart, ripe apples are sweet). As fruit matures, it develops sugars while the acids tend to recede. A great part of the artistry in wine making is to knowing just the right time to harvest the fruit to get the right balance between sugars and acidity

The role of acid is to give wine a lively taste and feeling on the palate, and it also helps preserve the wine as it ages. Low-acid wines have a flat or flabby feel in the mouth and they tend to age quickly.

It appears that many modern wine makers are leaving the grapes on the vine longer to achieve higher sugar levels, which translates into higher alcohol content ... with a commensurate reduction in the acid content. I know this is an oversimplification of a very complex process, but the point is that there are some serious trade-offs associated with making high-alcohol wines.

Acid-sugar balance is the basis of the primary difference between wines in the "old world" and "new world" styles. Most northern European wine growing regions have a shorter growing season than New World wine regions. Therefore, northern European wines generally have less time to generate high sugar levels, and they retain fairly high acid levels. Consequently, old world wines traditionally have a lower alcohol content, so they may require time in the bottle to soften the acids and other chemicals such as tannins, as well as develop their usually more delicate fruit flavors.

New world wines are much more accessible at a young age because the acids are already softened and the fruit is right up front. These characteristics combined with a high alcohol level, fit the label "fruit bomb". What difference does it make? Well, wines that are made in the Old World style are a bit more complex and reflect more of the

terroir. It is difficult with the “fruit bomb” style to tell if the wine was made in Australia, California, or Washington.

As a rule of thumb, the lower acid/higher alcohol wines from the New World are great as “cocktail” wines while the higher acid/lower alcohol Old World wines are great paired with food. Maybe it’s the global climate change but almost every wine we get these days is over the old “high range” of 13% alcohol. In any case, enjoy wine in moderation. (*Tip of the hat to John Juergens*).

## **Madison Valley Ranch plans wine dinner**

Christmas is over and the New Year has been rung in and we are already looking forward to Valentine’s Day. After having experienced the beauty and hospitality of the Madison Valley Ranch over a November weekend, I was delighted to be presented a chance to offer another wine dinner at this gorgeous venue on February 9<sup>th</sup>. The Madison Valley Ranch sold out every seat for our last dinner and they would love to have another congenial group come by for a romantic evening just a few days before Valentine’s Day.

The Madison Valley Ranch is located across the Madison River from Ennis in Jeffers, Montana. This beautiful setting won the **Lodge of the Year** from Orvis in 2015 and I can see why. There is a pond and a creek where you can practice your fly casting and it is a short walk through the Channels to the Madison if you prefer to river fish. At dusk we watched ring neck pheasants, sand hill cranes and osprey fly by serenaded by meadowlarks. In the adjacent field a moose family made daily appearances last summer and we were lucky enough to see a herd of deer foraging as we ate.

Our dinner will be prepared by Chef Matt Pease who stoked his creative energies to bring out dishes made with a variety of locally sourced victuals including smoked trout, Wagyu beef, local duck as well as beets, parsnips and cheeses. I came up with some delicious wines to pair and I would say, in all false modesty, it will be one of the best dining experiences in Madison County.

Jeanie and I as well as some other folks from Bozeman employed a strategy of staying at the lodge overnight instead travelling back in the dark. Believe me, the accommodations are first rate. The good news is the Madison Valley Ranch has a special deal for those who stay over (just mention the Wine Gallery dinner). It really can’t be beat for a fun night away from the city. As a bonus, in the morning, we were served a delicious breakfast with some of the best coffee I’ve had in years.

If you just want a ticket for dinner, it is \$89 including everything. Call us for the wine dinner only option at 586-8828 and we will get you a seat. If you wish to book the dinner **and** lodging package, I would suggest a call to the Madison Valley ranch directly at 800-891-6158. Call soon, the last event sold out quickly.