



Volume 15, No.2 (published by the Wine Gallery, Bozeman, MT) **January 10, 2018**

What's new in the Grapevine this week?

- **Vegan, gluten free, lactose free wine**
- **Why is the standard wine bottle 750 ml?**
- **Tasting the Best of Bozeman**
- **Results are in! 3-peat!**

Vegan, gluten free, lactose free wine

As more and more people encounter dietary restrictions, we get more and more questions about vegan, gluten free and lactose free wines.

Every year about this time, there is an uptick in those people who make a New Year's resolution to eat healthy. One of the healthiest diets is one that is plant based or "vegan". Now, some people are vegan for the nutritional benefits and some favor the plant based diet out of concern for animal welfare. For those folks who wonder if wine is vegan, we have good news and bad news.

Animal products are sometimes used in the winemaking process and it isn't always apparent which wines are vegan. Wine is typically very cloudy by the time it's done fermenting—all those bits of grapes and dead yeast cells (called "lees") end up floating around in suspension. The winemakers can try to filter out the solids, or just let the suspended solids precipitate, or fall to the bottom of a barrel or tank, where they will stay. Winemakers can also put the wine through a clarification process called "fining." In fining, a winemaker introduces a clarifying agent to the wine that attracts and binds to the suspended solids. These globs settle to the bottom, making it easier to draw the clarified wine off into another container (a process is called "racking").

This step is where animal products come in. Egg whites (either in their natural form or a powdered version) are one of the most popular substances used for fining. Other commonly used agents include isinglass

(fish bladder), casein (milk protein), and gelatin. All of those fining agents are animal based. Bentonite clay or seaweed are often used in wines that are marketed as "vegan friendly". If you're concerned about allergens, there's no evidence that any of the fining agent is left behind in the wine at the end of the process. Nutritionally, there is no animal product left in the wine so a vegan diet remains pure. If the objection to animal products is ethical, we can recommend a comprehensive website <http://www.barnivore.com/wine> to answer whether or not the wine is vegan friendly.

Sometimes it would be easier to determine there were some indicator on the label to let you know if a wine has no animal products. If the wine is labeled "unfiltered and unfinned", you are safe. Kosher wines are also made without animal products.

Ok, what about lactose? The list of fining agents includes milk casein but casein is a whole different chemical than lactose. Technically speaking, lactose and casein are simple components in milk and not one in the same. Someone who is allergic to casein or another milk protein would not be allergic to lactose. Likewise, someone who is lactose intolerant would not be intolerant of casein. Neither compound behaves the same way in the human body. This is why you may see casein as an ingredient in some lactose-free products, such as cheese alternatives. In the case of casein, there is no evidence that any is left in wine at the end of the fining process.

One last food sensitivity is gluten. There was a story going around a few years ago that wheat paste used to glue wine barrel heads to the staves could cause an allergic reaction in those who are gluten intolerant. However, wheat paste is very rarely used anymore and currently only in Europe. I really want to say never but I'm really not worried about gluten in wine. First of all, the paste rarely touches the wine, and secondly, in the case that it did, the extended fermentation period would kill all traces of the gluten protein. If you want to be super-safe, drink domestic wines or those that are tank fermented. (In tank fermentation, the wine is made in stainless steel tanks.)

Happy New Year!!

Why is the standard wine bottle 750ml?

Wine bottle history is fascinating. All those wine bottle shapes and colors date back to when most of the population of Europe was illiterate.

The size, shape and color of the wine bottle identified where it came from and was, in a sense, a label of origin.

But how did we standardize on the 750 milliliter bottle? Let's start in the 19th Century. It started in Bordeaux, where their main foreign clients were the English. Aside from other differences, the French and English never had the same measurement system, so it was hard to find an agreement. The English Imperial Gallon was 4.54609 liters and that made it awkward to invoice without a standard conversion. Understandably, both countries had to find an easier way to count. The solution was an example of finding a common ground: wine was put in barrels of 225 liters, or 50 gallons. 225 liters also equals 300 each 750 ml bottles. Also, it explains why wine was (and still is) sold in boxes of 6 or 12 bottles. (6 x 750 ml = 4.5 liters or 1 Imperial gallon and 12 x 750 ml = 9 liters or 2 Imperial gallons.)

Across the Atlantic, America had a whole different bottle size. Our standard was 1/5 US gallon (3.785 liters or .832 Imperial gallons.) The "fifth" in metric volume is 757 milliliters which is also the volume of 1/6 of an Imperial gallon. It wasn't that hard to convert our bottle size to match the European sizes. American businesses easily standardized bottle sizes to support consumer preferences for what was already selling well. It also facilitated export/import between countries with differing units. The American move to the metric system in the mid 1970's cinched that move for the US and Europe to standardize on 750ml.

Governments standardized bottle sizes for a couple of reasons. Taxes are much easier to calculate and collect when everyone has the same size product. It is also the responsibility of government agencies to prevent deception of consumers as to the quantity purchased. Win/win!

In spite of the uniform volume, numerous shapes and colors are represented in that 750 ml bottle. Maybe in the near future we can also share a column on the different shapes and colors.

New Year, New Format

The New Year calls for a new wine tasting format. In conjunction with **Saffron Table**, we will be hosting a short course featuring wines to pair with Asian cuisine on Tuesday, January 23.

Saffron Table is my favorite restaurant in Bozeman. In the current **Bozeman Choice Awards**, the Saffron Table won in the categories of Most Inspired and Interesting Restaurant Menu, Best World Food, and Best Vegetarian Entrées (Note: The Saffron Table is not exclusively vegetarian.) You can remind yourself why they have such a good reputation

when you book your seat at the tasting. Your tasting reservation will also serve as your dinner reservation if you wish. Our format includes a one half hour tasting event prior to dinner.

One of the questions we get asked most often is what wines to pair with Asian food. This tasting will hopefully provide good insight on how to select wine for Asian cuisine and serve to broaden your palate.

So, what is the new format? We will present three tasting sessions with each one limited to 8 people. The first session starts at 5:00 PM and includes five wines that pair with South Asian seasonings. All this will be interspersed by palate refreshers prepared by the Saffron Table. We will follow the first group with sessions at 5:30 and 6:00 PM. Note that your dinner seating will commence 30 minutes after your wine tasting session begins.

Please also note that the tasting is a separate charge from dinner. Dinner is at your option but I would take advantage of this opportunity to get both.

Please call us at 586-8828 to reserve your tasting and dinner placements. The cost for the tasting portion is \$25 per person without dinner but only \$15 per person if you stay for dinner afterwards. Book your seats soon, this will hit social media in a day or two!

It's Official! Best of Bozeman 3-peat!

We were tipped off about a month ago that the Wine Gallery had won its third consecutive Bozeman's Choice Award for **Best Wine Retailer**. This week the official results were announced and confirmed. You can see the entire list of Bozeman's Choice Award winners at <https://bozemanmagazine.com/bestof>.

The Wine Gallery also won second place in **Best Wine Selection** under the **Night Life and Libations** even though that section is exclusively tailored for restaurants and bars. Nightlife? We close at six. Libations? We can't uncork a bottle. We still did great in a category where we don't even belong.

All of us at the Wine Gallery want to thank you for voting for us. We hope we can remain worthy of the accolades and continue to provide the service and quality that will earn the award again next year.