

MORE WINE FACTS

- **Jefferson and wine:** From *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, by Stephen E. Ambrose, comes the following historical note. Jefferson took up residence in the President's House in 1801, after his inauguration as the 3rd President of the United States.

"Jefferson ran the place with only eleven servants (Abigail Adams had needed 30!), brought up from Monticello. There were no more powdered wigs, much less ceremony. Washington and Adams, according to Republican critics, had kept up almost a royal court. Jefferson substituted Republican simplicity - to a point. He had a French chef, and French wines he personally selected. His salary was \$25,000 per year - a princely sum, but the expenses were also great. In 1801 Jefferson spent \$6500 for provisions and groceries, \$2700 for servants (some of whom were liveried), \$500 for Lewis's salary, and **\$3,000 for wine.**"
- **Dom Perignon** (1638-1715), the Benedictine Abbey (at Hautvillers) cellar master who is generally credited with "inventing" the Champagne making process, was blind.
- **Thomas Jefferson** helped stock the wine cellars of the first five U.S. presidents and was very partial to fine Bordeaux and Madeira.
- To prevent a **sparkling** wine from foaming out of the glass, pour an ounce, which will settle quickly. Pouring the remainder of the serving into this starter will not foam as much.
- **Old wine** almost never turns to vinegar. It spoils by oxidation.
- U.S. 1998 **sales** of white and blush wines were 67% of total table wine sales. Red wines were 33% of sales. At Beekman's, the best we can calculate (since we don't track the color of wine sales from Chile, Australia or Spain or of jug wines) is that our sales of white and blush comprised only 45% of total wine sales. Reds accounted for 55%. That's in dollars, not unit sales. American wines accounted for 47% of our wine sales vs. 53% for imported wines.
- In **King Tut's** Egypt (around 1300 BC), the commoners drank beer and the upper class drank wine.
- According to local legend, the great French white Burgundy, Corton-Charlemagne, owes its existence, not to the emperor **Charlemagne**, but to his wife. The red wines of Corton stained his white beard so messily that she persuaded him to plant vines that would produce white wines. Charlemagne ordered white grapes to be planted. Thus: Corton-Charlemagne!
- When **Leif Ericsson** landed in North America in A.D. 1001, he was so impressed by the proliferation of grapevines that he named it Vinland.
- **Cork** was developed as a bottle closure in the late 17th century. It was only after this that bottles were lain down for aging, and the bottle shapes slowly changed from short and bulbous to tall and slender.
- **Merlot** was the "hot" varietal in 1999, but in 1949, the "darling of the California wine industry" was Muscatel!
- The Napa Valley **crop** described in 1889 newspapers as the finest of its kind grown in the U.S. was hops.
- When Mount Vesuvius buried **Pompeii** in volcanic lava in A.D. 79, it also buried more than 200 wine bars.
- The "top five" **chateau** of Bordeaux, according to the 1855 Classification, were actually only four: Lafite-Rothschild, Latour, Margaux and Haut-Brion. In the only change to that historic classification, Mouton-Rothschild was added in 1973.

- Grapevines cannot **reproduce** reliably from seed. To cultivate a particular grape variety, grafting (a plant version of cloning) is used.
- Wine has so many **organic** chemical compounds it is considered more complex than blood serum.
- Wine grapes are subject to **mold** when there's too much moisture. Tight clustered Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel and Pinot Noir are most susceptible to mold. The looser clusters of Cabernet Sauvignon allow for faster drying of moist grapes and thus make it less susceptible.
- In 1945, Chateau **Mouton-Rothschild** began a series of artists' labels, hiring a different artist each year to design a unique label for that vintage. The artists have included such notables as Chagall, Picasso, Miro and Warhol. The 1993 label was sufficiently controversial in this country (the stylized juvenile nude on the label offended the Political Correctness Police) that the Chateau withdrew the label and substituted a blank label instead.
- It is the VERY slow interaction of oxygen and wine that produces the changes noticed in **aging** wine. It is believed that wine ages more slowly in larger bottles, since there is less oxygen per volume of wine in larger bottles. Rapid oxidation, as with a leaky cork, spoils wine.
- Before harvest, the canopy of leaves at the top of the vine is often cut away to increase exposure to the sun and speed **ripening**.
- The average age of a French oak tree harvested for use in wine **barrels** is 170 years!
- The **lip** of a red wine glass is sloped inward to capture the aromas of the wine and deliver them to your nose.
- "**Cold maceration**" means putting the grapes in a refrigerated environment for several days before starting fermentation to encourage color extraction. This is being done more and more frequently with Pinot Noir since the skins of this varietal don't have as much pigmentation as other red varietals.
- Frenchman **Georges de Latour** came to America in the late 1800's to prospect for gold. He didn't find much gold, but he founded a truly golden winery: Beaulieu Vineyard.
- Mycoderma bacteria convert ethyl alcohol into acetic acid, thus turning wine into **vinegar**. However, most incidents of spoiled wine are due to air induced oxidation of the fruit, not bacterial conversion of alcohol to vinegar.
- The world's most planted grape **varietal** is Airén. It occupies over 1 million acres in central Spain where it is made into mediocre white wine, but some quite good brandy.
- Bettino Ricasoli, founder of Brolio, is credited with having created the original recipe for **Chianti**, combining two red grapes (Sangiovese and Canaiolo) with two white grapes (Malvasia and Trebbiano). Today the better Chiantis have little or no white grapes in them and may contain some Cabernet. They are thus deeper in color and flavor and more age worthy.
- From 1970 until the late 1980s, sales and consumption of wine in the United States held a ratio of about 75% white to 25% red. At the turn of the Millennium, the **ratio** is closer to 50-50.
- In the year 2000, Americans **spent** \$20 billion on wine. 72% of that was spent on California wines.
- In ancient **Rome** bits of toast were floated in goblets of wine. There is a story that a wealthy man threw a lavish party in which the public bath was filled with wine. Beautiful young women were invited to swim in it. When asked his opinion of the wine, one guest responded: "I like it very much, but I prefer the toast." (referring, presumably, to the women)

- “**Cuvée**” means “vat” or “tank.” It is used to refer to a particular batch or blend.
- **Beaujolais Nouveau** cannot be legally released until the third Thursday of every November. The due date this year (2001) is November 15th.
- We’re seeing more and more synthetic corks these days, but the latest technology to prevent contaminated corks is the use of **microwaves**.
- **Labels** were first put on wine bottles in the early 1700s, but it wasn’t until the 1860s that suitable glues were developed to hold them on the bottles.
- Top Napa Valley vineyard **land** sells for over \$100,000/acre!
- In the year 2000, there were 847 **wineries** in California.
- Wine is often called the nectar of the gods, but **Sangiovese** is the only grape named after a god. Sangiovese means “blood of Jove.”
- Ninety-two percent of California **wineries** produce fewer than 100,000 cases per year. Sixty percent produce fewer than 25,000 cases.
- Egg whites, bull’s blood, and gelatin have all been used as **fining agents** to remove suspended particles from wine before bottling. Egg whites are still commonly used.
- “**Brix**” is the term used to designate the percentage of sugar in the grapes before fermentation. For example, 23° brix will be converted by yeast to 12.5% alcohol, more or less, depending on the conversion efficiency of the strain of yeast used.
- In describing wine, the term “**hot**” refers to a high level of alcohol, leaving an hot, sometimes burning sensation.
- In the production of **port**, the crushed grapes are fermented for about two days. Then the fermentation is halted by the addition of a neutral distilled spirit or brandy. This raises the alcohol level and retains some of the grapes’ natural sugar.
- American wine drinkers consume more wine on **Thanksgiving** than any other day of the year.
- As of 2000, 554,000 **acres** in California were planted to grapevines.
- “**Still wine**” does not come from a still. The phrase refers to wine without bubbles, which includes what is also referred to as table wine.
- Fiasco [fee-YAHS-koh]; pl. fiaschi [fee-YAHS-kee] - Italian for “flask.” The word is most often connected with the squat, round-bottomed, straw-covered bottle containing cheaper wine from the Chianti region. The straw covering not only helps the bottle sit upright, but protects the thin, fragile glass. **Fiaschi** are seldom seen today as the cost of hand-wrapping each flask for cheaper wines has become prohibitive, and the more expensive wines with aging potential need bottles that can be lain on their sides.
- As early as 4000 BC, the Egyptians were the first people to use **corks** as stoppers.
- The wine industry generates 145,000 **jobs** in California.
- California has 847 **wineries**. Napa County is the home of 232 of them.
- Market research shows that most people **buy** a particular wine either because they recognize the brand name or they are attracted by the packaging. Not Beekman’s customers!
- Portugal has 1/3 of the world’s **cork** forests and supplies 85-90% of the cork used in the U.S.
- There are only three legal **categories of wine** in the U.S.: table, dessert, and sparkling. In the early 1950s, 82% of the wine Americans drank was classified as dessert wines. These included Sherry, Port, and Madeira. I don’t have current national figures, but Beekman’s sales of wine today are 90% table wine, 7% sparkling wine, and only 3% dessert wine!

- Until 1970, **Bordeaux** produced more white wine than red. Today red wine represents about 84% of the total crop.
- California produces approximately 77% of the U.S. wine grape **crop**
- There is at least one commercial winery in every **state** of the United States, including Hawaii and Alaska!
- Putting ice and kosher **salt** in a bucket will chill white wine or Champagne faster.
- The most popular **corkscrew**, the wing-type, is cheap and easy to use, but it frequently mangles corks and leaves small pieces of cork in your wine. It also tends to pull out just the middle of an old, dry cork. Far superior are the Screwpull, which is also easy to use, and the waiter's corkscrew, which requires just a little know-how to use effectively. No matter what type you use, you should also have a two-pronged (Ah-So) device to remove problem corks.
- **Zinfandel** first appeared in the United States in the 1820s when Long Island nursery owner George Gibbs imported several grape vines from the Imperial collection in Vienna. One of the vines was Zinfandel. (The current thinking is that Zinfandel originated in Croatia where it is called Plavac Mali.) In the 1850s, Zinfandel made its way to California.
- An Italian white wine called **Est! Est! Est!** got its name from a medieval story. A bishop was planning to travel the Italian countryside and asked his scout to find inns that had good wines, marking the door "Est" ("It is" or "This is it") when he found one. The scout was so excited about the local wine found in the area that he marked one inn's door "Est! Est! Est!" Another version of this story is that a priest was on his way to minister to a congregation in the boondocks. Upon discovering the wonderful local wine, he sent the message "Est! Est! Est!" back to Rome, renounced the priesthood, and spent the rest of his life enjoying the wine.
- The **auger** or curly metal part of a corkscrew is sometimes called a worm.
- **Graves** is thought to be the oldest wine region in Bordeaux.
- The Puritans loaded more **beer** than water onto the Mayflower.
- In terms of **acreage**, wine grapes rank #1 among all crops planted worldwide.
- Although "**château**" means castle, it may also be a mansion or a little house next to a vineyard that meets the requirements for winemaking with storage facilities on its property.
- Château **Petrus** is the most expensive of the Bordeaux wines. Its price is as much due to its tiny production as to its quality. Petrus is made from at least 95% Merlot grapes.
- The Egyptians were the first to make **glass** containers around 1500 B.C.E.
- The 1855 **Classification** of Médoc châteaux listed only the best properties. "Best" was defined as those properties whose wines were the most expensive. The top estates were then divided into five categories (the "growths") based on price.
- **Margaux** is the largest of the Médoc appellations.
- **Pomerol** is the smallest Bordeaux appellation.
- "**Grand Cru**" is French for "great growth" and designates the best. In Burgundy it refers to the best vineyards which usually have multiple owners. In Bordeaux its meaning varies by the specific region, but it always refers to properties under a single ownership.
- **Rose bushes** are often planted at the end of a row of grape vines to act as an early warning signal for infestation by diseases and insects like aphids. A vineyard manager who notices black spots or root rot on the roses will spray the grape vines before they are damaged.

- In Empire, California, some 400 copies of ***Little Red Riding Hood*** are locked away in a storage room of the public school district because the classic Grimm's fairy tale recounts that the little girl took a bottle of wine to her grandmother. --- Roger Cohen, New York Times, April 23, 1990 [The crazies aren't limited to Kansas.]