



Like Wine? Lower Alcohol Means Fewer Calories and Fewer Headaches

A recent Gallup Poll stated that 67 percent of adult Americans currently consume alcohol, which is the highest that figure has been in 25 years. For those earning more than \$75,000 a year, the number jumps to 80 percent. The Midwest prefers beer, while the Atlantic and Pacific coasts prefer wine.

We have all read about the potentially positive attributes of wine. In animal trials, rodents have experienced anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer benefits from resveratrol, a substance found in red wine (and also in peanuts, blueberries and the skin of red grapes), and a recent University of Buffalo 20-person study led by Husam Ghanim, PhD, found that there was a reduction in heart ^[1] disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes ^[2] in subjects who took resveratrol pills instead of a placebo. Whether or not one could, or should, drink enough wine to get the benefits of resveratrol is questionable. However, there is also the reduction of stress, the pleasure of sharing a bottle with friends and the fact that wine beautifully complements a variety of foods.

For those who choose to drink wine, the USDA recommendation is not more than two 5-ounce glasses per day for men, and one glass for women. This is a more conservative approach than some other countries. For example, England advises no more than three-to-four glasses per day for men, and two-to-three glasses for women, while France allows for a maximum of five glasses per day for men, and three for women.

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248

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^[3]

Although rarely mentioned, the amount of alcohol in the wine is more significant than the number of ounces in a glass. First of all, it's the alcohol that has the calories. A gram of protein or carbohydrate has 4 calories and a gram of fat. A gram of alcohol has 7.

It would be terrific if winemakers put calories per ounce on their labels. Although they don't, they usually list percentage of alcohol, which is a great piece of information, and also an easy way to determine calories.* So, check the label. The wine may have an alcohol content as low as 8 percent, or as high as 15 percent. ** Younger, lighter wines such as Rieslings, Rosés, and Vinho Verdes are often lower in alcohol, and so are Champagne and sparkling wines. Reds tend to be higher in alcohol, although there are some wonderful lower alcohol reds (often Pinot Noirs), and some high alcohol whites. Fortified wines, like port, are generally very high in alcohol.