

Wine, The Mocker

Wine, Women and Wrong

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Wasn't it the Apostle Paul who counseled his Christian converts, "Take a little wine for the stomach's sake?" Recent health news has pushed a new refrain, "Take a little wine for the heart's sake." Is it true that ethanol—in temperate amounts—is a heart-muscle custodian? Important questions demand verified answers, and that is indeed a weighty question! Over 400,000 of us die yearly of heart illnesses. You can call that important. That's more than 1,000 per day; more than 40 each hour. One of them might be someone you know. It may be you—or me.

So then, if modest sips of wine can reduce the heart-carnage, then it's time to drink up. Let's agree that most of us are content to slough off a light of gratifications for the sake of our heart-health—such as cutting out delectable foods like marbled steaks and bacon and eggs, Whoppers and Big Macs, pecan pie and jelly-filled doughnuts. And we give up other pleasures like cigarettes and cigars. We slog in the gym and jog in the rain – not much fun there, but we do it for our hearts.

So, should teetotalers climb off the wagon and drink a little wine? Here's cheers, along with heart preservation, and that's a hard duo to beat. But hold on now – there's more to consider.

Conventional wisdom, born of research, recognizes that alcohol in quantity is toxic—a poison and a killer. It's a cause of liver destruction (call it cirrhosis), and a promoter of certain cancers. And in quantity, it pickles the brain. Yet, science has been asserting for several years now that just a little alcohol is a balm for the heart. That's because it prevents (or delays) hardening of the heart arteries. Live a long and happy life courtesy of the vine – fermented, that is. But does it really? Is it true?

Let's consider this claim from the pages of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, issued several months ago. Remove the alcohol from red wine, it declared, and it is just as beneficial, if not better. The researchers required volunteers to drink a goblet of regular red wine. Then blood was drawn and measured for the levels of protective flavinoids. Next step was to drink red wine from which the alcohol had been distilled and discarded. Result? Watch carefully now—the levels of flavinoids were virtually identical, with or without the alcohol. Conclusion: Alcohol is not the good guy after all. It's the flavinoids! And indeed, the amounts thereof disappeared more rapidly from the blood if alcohol was present. Many experts believe that it's the grape seeds and skins, not the alcohol, that protect the heart. Long may we grow grapes, squeeze them, and drink their juice!

And from way across the Atlantic Ocean, British researchers assert that the alcohol levels enjoyed in social drinking promote significant levels of free radicals, the cancer felons that destroy good cells and encourage cancer.

So here's to heart health—a daily glass of grape juice, minus the alcohol. Bottoms up!

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