



## WINE NOTES

By Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher

**I**N THE YEARS we have been writing our "Tastings" column, which appears on Fridays, we have received thousands of questions about wine from readers. In this column, we answer some questions that touch on common themes. We have edited the questions for space. If you have a question, drop us a note at [wine@wsj.com](mailto:wine@wsj.com). Be sure to include your full name, city and state.

### COUNTING CALORIES

What is the average calorie count for wine? Does it vary greatly between Chardonnay, Zinfandel, Cabernet, Pinot Grigio or Merlot?

—Brian P. Williams,  
Evansville, Ind.

About 125 calories seems like a good, round average for a 5-ounce glass of table wine. Most of the calories in wine come from alcohol, so the higher the alcohol, the higher the number of calories. And, of course, sweetness adds calories, too. There is a fun calculator online, compliments of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, that breaks down all sorts of food and beverages by calories and other nutritional measures. You can find it here: [www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search). Just type "wine" into the keyword search, click the kind of wine you are searching for, and check the box for "1 serving 5 fl. oz." The number after "kcal" on the resulting chart is the calorie figure.



### BRINGING OVERSEAS WINE HOME

What are the rules for carrying wine bought overseas back to the U.S.? Is there a limit to the number of bottles I can carry and what is the Customs duty, if any?

—Glenn Fleischman,  
Manhasset, N.Y.

It's more complicated than you might think. In general, the rules allow you to bring back 1 liter of alcoholic beverages without extra duty. The regulations don't say how much you can bring back, except that it must be for personal use. As the rules say: "Unusual quantities are liable to raise suspicions that you are importing the alcohol for other purposes, such as for resale." In addition, state laws might affect all of this, depending on where you're returning. To calculate duties and to get more details on all of this, go to [cbp.gov](http://cbp.gov), then click on the "Travel" tab, then on "Know Before You Go" and then on "Determining Duty."

### HYBRID GRAPES

While on a trip to Kentucky, I took your advice to look for small wineries in places that one visits and crossed into southern Indiana in search of wineries on the Indiana Uplands Wine Trail. I spent a delightful afternoon tasting wines from hybrid grapes such as Chardonel. Why don't we see more of these on store shelves? Why are we left to find these gems at small, boutique wineries?

—Barb Rankin, Phoenix

Hybrid grapes are generally created to withstand difficult weather conditions and, on the whole, are not as highly regarded as classic vinifera grape types, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir. (Chardonel was created in New York as a cross between Chardonnay and Seyval Blanc.) They're also less familiar to most people and therefore, we'd guess, a tougher sell. But in the hands of passionate small winemakers, hybrids can make very enjoyable and quite distinctive wines. That's another reason why it's so important to visit the winery next door and see what's happening. You never know what kind of new taste sensation might be awaiting you. Remember that there are more than 4,000 wineries in the U.S. and over half of them are not in California.

—Melanie Grayce West contributed  
to this column.