

I Was a Wino for the California Wine Institute

by Joan d'Arc

I'd been hearing reports for years that a glass of red wine a day would keep the doctor away, so I was drinking up as fast as I could. It had to be true. I had seen it on TV. Heard it on the radio. Read it online. But one day the truth hit me. Who is it that's telling me to drink alcohol? How could this be good advice? That was when I discovered the truth about the Wine Institute's publicity campaign to turn me into a Wino!

According to a report published in 1997 by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the California Wine Institute has mounted a decade long publicity campaign to erroneously promote the health benefits of wine consumption. The report, titled *Vintage Deception*, alleges that, "the Institute's propaganda spreads the deceptive and potentially dangerous message that moderate drinking - especially moderate wine consumption - is an important factor in maintaining all-around good health for the general public."

The bogus health studies claim that the antioxidant resveratrol, prevalent in the skin of red grapes, may inhibit tumor development in some cancers, may aid in the formation of nerve cells, and may even be helpful in the treatment of Alzheimers and Parkinsons!

Wow! Why don't you just eat red grapes then?

The authors of the report, Laura Steinhardt and George Hacker, assert that, "the wine industry's pronouncements about scientific findings of the benefits of moderate alcohol consumption have saturated the media and entered the public consciousness." Although some studies have associated moderate alcohol consumption with a reduced risk for heart disease for some people, "alcohol does not benefit all people and certain individuals should avoid it altogether."

I appeared to be one of those people because every time I drank this health beverage I swore like a sailor and got into fist fights!

The *Vintage Deception* report alleges that the California Wine Institute has: "made exaggerated claims about the health benefits of alcohol and wine; suggested human health benefits from wine on the basis of an unpublished laboratory study; regularly omitted the cautions and qualifications made by researchers whose studies it cites; and failed completely to mention the health risks of alcohol consumption."

One chart on the Wine Institute's website (www.wineinstitute.org) lists benefits of moderate alcohol consumption on, among other things: the common cold, kidney stones, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, cognition and memory and pancreatic cancer! While touting wine as a "virtual panacea," the California Crack Institute does not mention the most obvious reason why wine is not good for you: There's a demon in the bottle!

Among its bogus studies, in January 1997 the Wine Institute published a report saying that resveratrol in wine acts as an anti-cancer agent; yet, the mice in the study

had consumed the resveratrol equal to five gallons of wine a day. I apparently wasn't drinking enough of it! But wait, there was no evidence that the resveratrol could be absorbed into the human bloodstream through food or wine consumption. The quacks at the Institute hadn't informed me I had to mainline it!

"There is no health magic in wine," says Sheila B. Blume, M.D. "I would never recommend that anyone begin drinking because alcohol has many destructive health effects." Yes, indeed. Many women head straight home from work to cook, clean and drink wine. The truth is, wine is not a health beverage; it's bad for your liver, your brain, your gut ph balance, and, for women, your breasts!

In May 1997, the same month that the journal *Epidemiology* suggested avoidance of alcohol to reduce breast cancer risk, the Wine Institute's report suggested that moderate wine consumption is not associated with increased risk of breast cancer. While the American Cancer Society has cautioned women to limit their alcohol consumption, the Wine Institute excluded the actual opinions of authors of these studies!

The U.S. is soon to catch up with France in its annual consumption of wine. Is this an accident or are we controlled? In France, high wine consumption translates into severe alcohol problems. Says the *Vintage Deception* report, "the rate of coronary heart disease may be relatively low, but deaths from alcohol-related digestive diseases and cancers, as well as unintentional injuries, are excessive, recently estimated at nearly 25% of all premature mortality."

In the U.S., "alcohol is the third-leading cause of premature death; its use and abuse result in more than 100,000 deaths annually and impose more than \$100 billion in economic damage on society." If you're going to drink wine, don't do it because it's "good for you."

After all, who needs an excuse to be a Wino?

References

Nutrition Advisor, "A glass of red wine a day keeps the doctor away." www.ynhh.org/online/nutrition/advisor/red_wine.html.

Vintage Deception: The Wine Institute's Manipulation of Scientific Research to Promote Wine Consumption. Available for \$5.00 plus \$3.50 s/h: CSPI, Alcohol Policies, 1875 Connecticut Ave. N.W. Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009. www.cspinet.org/booze/vintage.htm

Wine Institute: www.wineinstitute.org