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## Have a picnic with these wines

Lynne Char Bennett

Sunday, June 21, 2009



Summertime is picnic time. Boxes and other alternative packages allow wines to be easily transported and served outdoors.

Because it has minimal exposure to light and air, bag-in-a-box wine also lasts longer. Some producers claim up to 45 days even without refrigeration - one reason the wine comes in a budget-friendly 3-liter box, equivalent to four, 750 ml conventional glass bottles.

Other packaging options besides glass include the Tetra Pak. The newest bottle alternative is the lightweight polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottle that is BPA-free. All three are recyclable. They also weigh less than an equivalent volume of wine in glass bottles, so require less energy to transport.

Like glass bottles, both Tetra Paks and the PET bottle expose wine to air after being opened, so 500 ml to 1 liter sizes are the norm.

Boxed Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon still command the most shelf space, but others varietals like Riesling and Picpoul de Pinet can be found. The overall quality has improved, though you should still enjoy it in its youth.

There still is a certain defiant cachet when serving wine from something other than a glass bottle. You can enjoy it straight from the box, but if you decide to serve it from a carafe, your guests will be none the wiser.

### Tips for bringing along boxed wines

Here are a few suggestions for your summer box wine adventures

-- Tetra Paks are not as sturdy as a PET bottle or bag-in-a-box, but can be chilled directly in ice.

-- Because it has four times the volume of a 750 ml. bottle, a well-chilled box of wine will remain cold for a relatively longer time.

-- Boxed red wine will taste better if slightly chilled, especially if it will be served during summer's heat.

-- Tuck the spout back in the box before transporting an already-opened box wine.

**NV Alice White South Eastern Australia Shiraz** (\$5/500 ml Tetra Pak) Alice White - part of giant Constellation Wines - has been available in the U.S since 1996. Cherry, plum and a bit of Syrah spice plus slight menthol and hints of green. Lighter weight and lower alcohol level make this quaffer versatile for food pairing. (Importer: Alice White)

**2008 Black Box Wines Columbia Valley Riesling** (\$25/3L box) Ryan Sproule's Black Box Wines - first available in 2003 - was a leader in the premium boxed wine category. Seven different varietals (plus two reserve offerings) include the inaugural release of this Washington state Riesling. Delicate stone fruit, honied apricot, pear and citrus aromas; a sprightly off-dry palate has bright acidity.

**2007 Bota Box California Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$19/3L box) Bota Box, from Delicato Vineyards, was launched in late 2003. There are six varietals including this bottling, which shows varietal Cabernet character. Medium-bodied with good extract, sweet blackberry, spice, slight leather and smoke aromas and flavors. Try the 2007 Bota Box Old Vine California Zinfandel (\$19) with barbecue.

**2006 Fog Mountain California Merlot** (\$13/1L PET bottle) Advertised as the first California wine bottled in polyethylene terephthalate (PET), it is produced through a Boisset Family Estates and JW Marriott Hotels joint venture. Dark boysenberry, touched with earthiness on the nose. A fruitier palate that offers some spice and concentration; long finish.

**2008 La Petite Frog Coteaux du Languedoc Picpoul de Pinet** (\$35/3L box) This crowd-pleaser is from the Cave de Pomerols cooperative located in the Coteaux du Languedoc region of southern France. A clean, bright nose of citrus and ripe yellow melon; light, zippy palate with white grapefruit and hint of mineral on mouthwatering finish. A great aperitif or accompaniment to seafood. (Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils)

**2007 Red Truck California Red Wine** (\$30/3L mini-barrel) First introduced in bottle, this blend from winemaker Charlie Tsegeletos offers dark berryish fruit with overtones of pepper and chocolate-covered cherry. Soft tannins on the finish; pleasant on its own and weighty enough for grilled meat. Blend of Syrah, Petite Sirah, Cabernet Franc and Merlot in an eye-catching package.

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This article appeared on page **E - 5** of the San Francisco Chronicle