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## Drinking Inside the Box



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Are Americans finally getting over the stigma surrounding boxed wine?

While domestic table wine sales grew 5.3% annually in March, [according to the SymphonyIRI Group](#), three-liter boxed wine sales have grown at a much higher rate: 17.9% over the same 52 weeks. Boxed wines now make up almost a quarter of total wine sales in the U.S.

This may be a sign of recessionary times — after all, boxed wines are often cheaper and more convenient than their bottled counterparts. But is the trend here to stay? For many of us,

wine-in-a-box calls up collegial days of “Tour de Franzia” theme parties and inappropriate chugging. If we are to drink boxed wine at all, we drink it behind closed doors or dispose of the evidence by pouring it in a decanter first.

Recently, though, boxed wine is getting a much-needed face lift. Italy’s Agriculture Ministry started handing out quality guarantees to boxed wines from some of Italy’s finest wineries. Manufacturers are also upgrading the box — and winning accolades. [French Rabbit](#) wines uses small Tetrapak containers while [Black Box](#), which sells its California wine for \$20 a pop, has garnered awards from Wine Spectator and Consumer Reports for its 2008 Chardonnay and 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon.

“Not only are there more quality boxed wines in the market, but the market is demanding it,” says Daniel Johnnes, the wine director for renowned chef Daniel Boulud. Mr. Boulud serves boxed wine by From the Tank at his DBGB restaurant in New York City.

Messrs. Johnnes and Boulud started [Dtour](#) wines in 2004. The wine is packaged in svelte cylinders and won the approval of wine critic Robert Parker, who predicted it would be a “huge success.” Three vintages later, they stopped production to concentrate on Mr. Boulud’s expanding restaurant empire, but they continue to support alternative packaging, Mr. Johnnes says.

There’s even more reason to embrace the box: The bags that contain the wine actually keep the wine fresher than bottles do. And boxed wine is more environmentally friendly — the boxes weigh less and are easier to transport, plus much of the packaging is recyclable and far less material-heavy than glass. Throw in the convenience factor, and boxed wine is an increasingly appealing — and tasty — alternative.

*Tell us your boxed wine recommendations.*



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