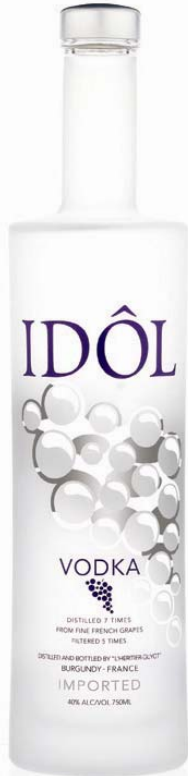


The Great Grape Vodka Trend by Amy Reiley



Listen up liquor lovers, now two of our favorite aphrodisiac elixirs have combined into one seductive package. The latest trend in boutique vodkas is to make your clean, clear spirit from premium wine grapes.

Despite the theory that vodka is to be a neutral spirit, a market for premium vodkas leads us to invest substantial sums into products that are supposed to have superior taste. And, indeed, vodkas have subtle but substantial differences in flavor. Think about it: would you rather take a shot of Smirnoff or Ketel One? Whether you answer Ketel One, (as I would), or not, I'll bet you answered.

So for those of us with a taste for vodka growing in sophistication with every sip, the grape gang has entered the market. And though you probably think the "grapiness" would go undetected, the products of the vine do assert their origins with almost indescribable stemmy overtones and a fruit-based roundness, the way it fills the mouth is more like fruit than a clear spirit).

The makers of Idol vodka claim that grape-based products have benefits beyond a complex flavor. Yep, you guessed it. Grape-based vodka may have some of the same antioxidant benefits as does wine. (Idol makes their claim based in the fact that their vodka is made in part from Burgundian Pinot Noir grapes, found to contain some of the highest proportions of antioxidants of any grapes in the world.) Although I love the idea of drinking for my health, I'm still wary of the Idol claim. Be that as it may, I look forward to filling my glass with the crystal clear fruit of the vine.

Most grape vodkas are made in Europe but are distributed throughout the USA. Brands of note include:

Idol
Ciroc
Swan's Neck
Roth