



## All You Can Eat

« [Duck over to Truckee](#)

NOV  
07  
2006

### Turning wine into vodka

*Posted by Jodie Chase on November 7th, 2006*

The standard for most top shelf, high-end vodkas is to be a colorless, odorless liquid as devoid of flavor as possible. Vodka is to be a blank canvas, without personality.

For this reason, I take little interest in vodka. I've tried potato vodka and grain vodka. I've tried super-distilled vodka and vodka from every corner of the world. Side-by-side there are miniscule differences in flavor. But they're all vodka.

But a few weeks back, an e-mail press release about the new Idol vodka made from wine grapes caught my interest. The news bite suggested this was a vodka specifically for wine drinkers \_ that's me! \_ and that it's a vodka with personality. The vodka, the release claimed, was a reflection of terroir - of Burgundy, France to be exact.

Grapes? Terroir? Now this is the kind of talk that wine drinkers understand. First off, I couldn't shake the idea of wasting perfectly good wine grapes on vodka. The idea of making a vodka with actual flavor was even more bizarre. I decided I needed to 1) taste the vodka, and 2) talk to these people about their crazy, nonvodka approach to vodka-making.

First, the taste: I poured a smidge into a large wine glass and added a chunk of ice to open the spirit. I smelled it, then tasted it. It was distinctly different from many vodkas I've tried. It has a long taste; fuller, sweeter and smoother than any grain vodka.

The next day, I got Jean-Charles Boisset, head of Boisset America, on the phone. He explained that the vodka is made from a 50-50 mix of pinot noir and chardonnay grapes, the very same grapes from which French Champagne is made. The grapes are made into wine, which is then distilled seven times.

Boisset, who is also a winemaker not only in Burgundy, but also in the Russian River Valley \_ he owns De Loach Vineyards \_ says the idea for making an ultrapremium vodka from grapes first occurred to him seven years ago.

"I do not like spirits that burn my tongue and my throat. They make me feel like my breath will start a fire," he says.

Even though turning good wine grapes into a relatively flavorless, colorless liquid seems a shame, Boisset says the wine community welcomes the idea, as it is a good solution to too many wine grapes.

"There are so many grapes that are used for other purposes. This is actually a great use for the excess," he says, admitting that while the grapes that go into the vodka are good quality, they do not use grand cru grapes.

As if to prove he is indeed a wine person, Boisset went on to chat about how Idol is made from grapes that are sustainably farmed, tended by locals who handpick the grapes at just the right moment.

Boisset says his new vodka, \$30 to \$35 per bottle, is perfect for mixing with all things fruity, including orange juice, cranberry juice, and even sparkling wine. \_  
Jolene Thym

Filed under [General](#). You can follow any comments on this post through the [RSS](#) feed.  
You can [leave a comment](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.