

# Found in the Stacks: Salute to the Salad Maker

Salads are my go-to meal when the days heat up and I was curious about their place in the culinary history of Los Angeles. What types of salads were Angelenos making and eating in the early 20th century? I went searching in the Los Angeles Public Library's collections and resources for salads and salad making in Los Angeles and found quite a few interesting things.

First, I perused two of the library's oldest Los Angeles-based cookbooks, *Los Angeles Cookery* (1881) and *How We Cook in Los Angeles* (1894).

Both were written as church fundraisers and feature recipes supplied by prominent local women. Curiously, salad recipes in *Los Angeles Cookery* were found in the chapter on Sauces. Homemade mayonnaise was the most popular "sauce" for salads. The book had seven mayonnaise recipes in the short chapter, each with various additions such as sugar, mustard or cayenne. Chicken salad was the most popular salad—represented by multiple recipes—followed by potato salad and cabbage salad. Salads were treated to their own chapter in *How We Cook in Los Angeles*. Here French dressing joined the mayonnaise recipes, and salads include fruit and vegetable salads as well as a number of seafood salads, all of which highlight their specific ingredient.



A salad maker and customer at a Boos Bros. cafeteria from *Glancing Back Along the Cafeteria Trail* (1926). Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections

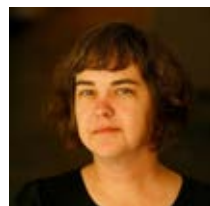
While searching in historical local newspapers I was intrigued to read about the "salad makers" themselves. [It was even an occupation designation on the census!] Los Angeles city directories listed the professionals with the designation 'salad mkr'. Many of those listed worked at cafeterias and tea rooms. According to these early twentieth century newspapers, the qualities that made an excellent salad maker included the ability to mix complementary ingredients in a specific order, and the successful blending of mayonnaise sauces. Salad maker tips

included their preference for tearing lettuce leaves instead of cutting them, the encouragement to use wooden implements, and the practical advice of adding bell peppers and cucumbers on the side of the plate as garnish so they could be picked off the salad if desired.

The library's menu collection, some of which is digitized and available on their website, is another great way to learn what types of salads Angelenos were eating. For example, a few of the salads listed on a seventy-year-old Musso & Frank menu in the library's holdings can still be ordered at the restaurant today, including the Avocado Salad, Chiffonade Salad and Musso-Frank Special. Meanwhile, a Smoke House menu from a similar era shows how their salad options have grown considerably. In the 1950s you could order a chef's salad or fruit salad, while today you can also get a beet & quinoa salad, or their barbecued chicken salad. You can even order Hollywood's legendary Cobb salad at the Smoke House restaurant in Burbank, or you can try making a variation of the original at home. A recipe for Robert Cobb's salad can be found in *The Brown Derby Cookbook* (1949) available at the Central Library. It is interesting to note that the recipe's salad greens included iceberg, romaine, watercress and chicory. Many of the Brown Derby recipes feature their French dressing, which according to the cookbook was bottled and sold to the public. I gotta say, their French dressing recipe was easier to perfect than the mayonnaise recipes we tried!



Mrs. Savneck prepares her fruit salad for a Burbank Junior Woman's Club Salad Bar Luncheon (1962). Jeff Goldwater/Valley Times Photo Collection



Tiffney Sanford joined the Culinary Historians in 2007 and enjoys browsing the large culinary collection at Central Library. She maintains (to varying degrees of regularity) the blogs *Hollywood Gastronomical Haunts* and *Los Angeles Library Tour*, and contributes to the *Los Angeles Public Library* blog.

The California Bear-Chef first appeared in the *Pan-Pacific Cook Book*, 1915.



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The Culinary Historians of Southern California  
at the  
LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

According to the California Craft Brewers Assoc., California is the birthplace of the American craft brewing movement. As of Jan 2023, more than 1,100 breweries are in operation, more than any other state in the U.S. In 2021, they contributed \$9.03 billion to the economy and supported 54,036 jobs across CA. San Diego is the "Capital of Craft," with over 130 independent breweries. <https://californiacraftbeer.com>

# THE FOOD JOURNAL

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## Upcoming Programs at the Central Library's Mark Taper Auditorium (unless otherwise specified)

September 9, 2023  
George Geary  
"History of California Foods & Iconic L.A. Restaurants"

October 14, 2023  
Pat Saperstein  
"Lunching on the Lot: How Stars and Moguls Ate at Studio Commissaries"

November 11, 2023  
Kitty Morse  
"My Family's Alsatian Wartime Journal, with Recipes" (program via Zoom)

December 9, 2023  
Alex Prud'homme  
"Eureka: How California Shaped the Diet of Three Presidents"

January 13, 2024  
Charles Perry  
"Muslim Wine? Yes, Muslim Wine"

### San Francisco's Anchor Brewing, the Oldest Craft Brewer in the U.S., Closed After 127 Years

Though it survived the 1906 earthquake, Prohibition and both world wars, "The stake through the heart of Anchor was the pandemic," a company spokesman said. Founded in 1896, the impacts of inflation and a highly competitive market led to the closure.

With 70 percent of its product being sold in restaurants and bars, Anchor Brewing continued to adapt, rebrand, rebottle and can more of its beers to sell in grocery stores over the years. In 2017, the company was acquired for \$85M by Japanese beer giant Sapporo. More recently, Anchor took another approach and limited sales to California, and stopped producing it's Christmas ale. But these strategies couldn't make up for the loss of sales.



Brewing has ceased, but the remaining inventory will be distributed and sold on draft for awhile. Get your last swig while it's available and commiserate with other beer fans.



Charles Perry  
CHSC President

### Learning from Nickie V

I'm about to analogize food history to botany here. Bear with me.

I've always been troubled by the idea of a *dish* – say, apple pie. It's not the same as a *recipe*. There are in fact countless recipes for apple pie, differentiated by crust, or filling, or whether you serve it hot topped with a slice of Cheddar (BTW, where did *that* idea come from?), not to mention individual cooks' favorite twists.

At a given time or place, people may be confident that there is something like a "standard" recipe, with all others being variations, but in the wider world there will probably be several or even many such "standards." Food writers may promote the idea of a single standard (for one thing, because they can't possibly know all the versions in use). Nevertheless, apple pie remains a whole galaxy of recipes in glacially slow evolution.

During the 1930s, a Russian botanist named Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov studied the domestication of food plants. He noted that they all began as wild plants which people simply gathered. Then, as farmers, they started intentionally planting the seeds, and when they began to select seeds in order to get particular versions they like (because there always is a certain amount of genetic variation in plants), they had a domesticated crop.

But the crop's homeland is also home to its wild cousins, and when insects go a-pollinating,  
*Continued on page 6*



Nancy Zaslavsky  
CHSC Vice President,  
Programs

### Program Notes

Receptions following programs celebrate the speaker and gives us all a chance to chat one-on-one with our guest while enjoying delicious snacks relating to their topic. Long overdue is specific thanks from us all to our Hospitality Committee members who plan, cook, and thoughtfully present those delicious morsels. To Chair, Sandeep Gupta, and his tireless crew we send out a warm thank you for the committee's contributions in 2023. New members: how about lending a hand this fall? Offer your help to the group prior to any program—they can be found in the small kitchen area off the lobby.

Please consider generously supporting CHSC with a sponsorship of one of our monthly expenses. These tax deductible sponsorships make a big difference to our bottom line and can be earmarked for your favorite speaker's reception expenses, videotaping, and even travel costs. Contact Madeleine for details at [books@chocal.org](mailto:books@chocal.org)

If you missed any CHSC programs during the first half of 2023 at the Central Library's Taper Auditorium, here's a rundown. Past talks are available on [chsocial.org](http://chsocial.org) for viewing. At January's annual president's lecture Charles Perry spoke on how well Egyptian pharaohs ate. Beans, greens, and gourds; wheat and leavened breads; fish, game, and domesticated cattle; sweet honey, dates, and fruits were all washed down with plenty of wine and a grand time was had by all. Valerie Campbell spoke in February on the history of ice cream and frozen desserts from the Roman Empire through today. In March, Sarah Lohman treated us to another effervescent talk, this year on America's vanishing foods, as a pre-publishing gift for our group since her new book will be out in October when her video will be up on [chsocial.org](http://chsocial.org). April introduced charming Susanne Joskow to our group  
*Continued on page 6*

# Amusing Drinking Cups and Accessories

We humans are so clever with our favorite pastime of drinking. Check out these special vessels that entertain and bewilder, up the game of a bartender, and raise the status of a classy tea-drinker.

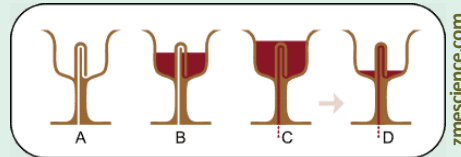


## Puzzle Jugs

In 17th-19th century Western Europe, getting drunk wasn't automatically assured when served by beautiful, brain-teasing puzzle jugs. Its designers intentionally created hidden channels (and painted friendly wagers into the pottery) to make savvy drinkers plug the holes with their fingers while drinking in order to achieve any degree of intoxication without spilling most of the liquid into their lap.

## Pythagorean Cup or "Greedy" Cup

This clever practical joke, invented by the famous 6th century BC Greek philosopher and mathematician, forced people to imbibe only in moderation – a virtue of great regard among ancient Greeks. If the user was too greedy and poured wine over the designed threshold, the cup would spill its entire content. The cup looks like any other, but the cross-section reveals a hollow pipe-like chamber that leads to dismay and stupefaction by a glutton saddened by precious brew wasted on the floor.



## Beer Comb or Foam Flipper or Head Cutter



When your bartender poured beer into your mug during the drinking days of old, and it begins to foam over, they would behead it by using a beer comb to level it with the glass rim. This fancy, stainless steel bartending tool died out in popularity, probably due to their unsanitary nature, since it was stored in a glass of water that sat barside and would eventually become unclean.

## Mustache Cups

What do you get the man who has everything in the late 19th century, including a luxuriant mustache? A cup equipped with a small ledge to keep the knowledgeable tea-drinker's whiskers dry. This wasn't just a convenience – drinking tea could literally get you into hot water. The heat could melt mustache wax, and make it droop flaccidly on the cheek. This sippy cup solution for adult men was sold in great quantities everywhere in Europe and then in the U.S.



## Goon Sack

In Australia, locals call cheap cask wine "goon" and it's sold in disposable, inflatable, silver bags that can hold up to 4 liters (as opposed to a .75-liter wine bottle). But the least interesting thing Australians do with these giant bags is drink from them. Inspired drinkers have transformed empty vessels into pillows, and rafts. They also play "goon of fortune" from a sack pinned to a rotating clothesline. They spin the line and wait for it to stop. Whoever is sitting under the sack takes a drink. "Goon layback" among students involves laying on the floor while a pourer dispenses the booze into each player's mouth until receiving a signal to stop. As the pourer moves on, the drinker runs to the end to get back in line. Try these goon sack Olympics at your next get together!

# A Letter from the Editor

When we describe "food history," we really mean "the history of food AND drink." There's so much to read and learn about all sorts of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, particularly ones that are uniquely connected to Southern California. We're exploring just a few ideas in this issue, and will continue to feature articles and concepts that pique our interest in the future.



Along with this, and any food-related topic, there's usually a bit of intrigue into secret or unknown histories, opinions about what really happened, and sometimes a reinterpretation of what's commonly assumed. This can be interesting, informative, and entertaining for food (and drink!) lovers, so we're presenting a few here for your consideration.

Please note that the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of CHSC or its members, nor is their appearance intended to malign any group, organization, company, individual, or anyone, or anything. Enjoy!

Sharon



## Los Angeles Cocktails

L.A. has a liquid past that stretches back for generations, according to *Imbibe Magazine*. They asked bartenders from The Eveleigh, The Varnish, Harlowe and Tiki-Ti to name the most famous, classic Los Angeles cocktails.

**BROWN DERBY** Named for the restaurant that was a centerpiece of mid-20th century L.A., the Brown Derby has become a familiar mix at cocktail bars across the country.

**FLAME OF LOVE** Chasen's was a Beverly Hills watering hole long cherished by the Hollywood set. The Flame of Love was crafted by bartender Pepe Ruiz in 1970 for one of the bar's famous regulars, Dean Martin, and was purportedly such a hit that Frank Sinatra once ordered a round for everyone in the restaurant.



**HARVEY WALLBANGER** An essential drink of the '70s disco and fern-bar era, this drink has a past that is murky and full of questions. But whether the popular story of its creation in a Sunset Boulevard bar turns out to be true—and it's likely we'll never know for sure—there's something about this cocktail that simply shouts L.A.

**MOSCOW MULE** Now ubiquitous at cocktail bars worldwide, the Moscow Mule was the simple drink that initiated the vodka flood following its 1946 debut at the Cock 'n' Bull Pub in Hollywood.



**ZOMBIE** Donn Beach was famously cagey about sharing his cocktail recipes, especially the one for his legendary Zombie, but tiki expert Jeff Berry pieced the recipe together through historical research and lucky encounters with former Beachcomber employees.

Source: Los Angeles Cocktails. (2015, August 15). *Imbibe Magazine*. <https://imbibemagazine.com/classic-cocktails-of-los-angeles/>

## The Culinary Historians of Southern California [www.chsocal.org](http://www.chsocal.org)



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A recent column in *The Wall Street Journal* offers a rum cocktail version of the sherbet-ey Orange Julius, citing a Los Angeles orange juice salesman named Julius Freed as the inventor of the original drink. Having spent several years mulling over the history of this American fast-food icon for my newish book, *American Food: A Not-So-Serious History*, I wanted to take a moment to correct the historical record.

## The real Orange Julius was Willard Hamlin

Julius Freed — the Julius in Orange Julius — was likely a former cigar store owner named Julius Fried, who moved to California from Butte, Montana, according to a 1983 story in the *Montana Standard*, the area's local paper. If their assumption was correct, then Julius Freed/Fried likely left Butte in the early 1900s after a bankruptcy and a couple of arrests for encouraging the illegal gambling that took place in the back of his flagship smoke shop.

In 1926, Freed/Fried did open a freshly squeezed orange juice stall in downtown Los Angeles — in the ground floor of 820 S. Broadway, now home to a sunglasses shop, a secondhand boutique, and a cell phone store — when those were common all over Southern California. (This was during Prohibition, after all.) But it was Freed/Fried's real estate agent, Willard "Bill" Hamlin, who made the first real Orange Julius.

Hamlin convinced Freed/Fried to carry his secret powdered vanilla-ey formula that turns blended orange juice, sugar syrup, and crushed ice into that icy cold, fluffy, Creamside-y drink. Hamlin then invested \$6,800 and went into business with Freed/Fried and a building contractor named William Larkin.

This part of the story is not really a big secret, either. According to a lengthy, lovely 1987 obituary in the *Los Angeles Times*, Hamlin had a sensitive stomach and an interest in chemistry, hence his drive to tinker with a new drink. But I believe his real estate background was just as important: As with Ray Kroc and the McDonald brothers some 30 years later, Hamlin seemed to predict the future of fast food: franchising.

Hamlin and Larkin bought out Freed/Fried fairly early on, then they began to build beautiful freestanding Googie-style drive-ins that could take advantage of the automobile. They also sold hamburgers and hot dogs with names like the Mongrel and the Pickle Pooch.

The company was aggressive in its expansion: Classified ads from the mid-1900s show they offered expensive franchises in the heart of big cities — in 1929, the first in Manhattan opened in Times Square at Broadway and 46th Street — as well as in smaller suburbs, often for just \$500. In the mid-1950s, Hamlin and Larkin were even giving out \$100 for leads on new locations. (One of the last operational buildings in Los Angeles, most recently a defunct burger stand, was rejected in 2017 for landmark protection by the city, though the developer who bought the land will incorporate elements of the building into the project.)

When Hamlin retired in 1967 and sold the company to International Industries Inc., there were already more than 400 Orange Julius outlets around the country, plus a few in Canada, Japan, China, Puerto Rico, and several countries in Southeast Asia.

## An Orange Julius was meant to be made with "fresh" oranges

Now, I love canned concentrate. I will eat it with a spoon, when you can still find it, just like a granita. But if I am making my own Orange Julius? Nope. No way. Because based on my research, the

whole point of the original drink was fresh oranges, considering it was created when the Southern California countryside was blanketed with them.

In 1931, in fact, stores were even taking out ads to lure folks to see a Julius being "made on the new Sunkist extractor." And up until about 30 or so years ago — when Orange Juliuses had migrated from those cool stand-alone stores to the mall — most of the joy of a Julius came from the fresh squeezing of the oranges, both in flavor and in fun-factor. Even in the early mall years, the juice was still being squeezed from scratch while you waited. But I recently ordered an Orange Julius at my local DQ Grill & Chill in Manhattan: It's a scoop of powder from a tub, a plug from a box of juice, and a whiz in a blender.

## The Real History of Orange Julius

By Rachel Wharton



Most Orange Julius freaks you meet, in my experience, are over 30, and I think one reason is because they had a taste of the original.

Most Orange Julius freaks you meet, in my experience, are over 30, and I think one reason is because they had a taste of the original. In my mind, the move from fresh oranges marked the beginning of Orange Julius' decline — at least as a destination. Dairy Queen, after buying the company in 1987, eventually started downsizing the brand, at first by turning most of the Orange Julius shops into combo Dairy Queen "Treat Centers."

By the end of 2018, all the stand-alone Orange Juliuses had been renovated into Dairy Queens, and the only thing left of the brand was a few items on the beverage menu and a logo on a cup. I think I may have spotted the only freestanding Orange Julius left while passing through the Vancouver airport in early 2018, but because that's in Canada, maybe it doesn't count.

## Powders!

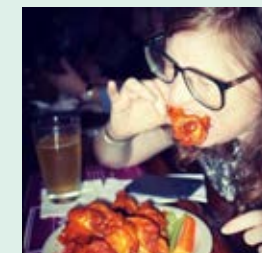
According to a 1953 interview with Bill Hamlin in the *Argus* newspaper in Covina, California, the original Orange Julius secret recipe included seven pure food powders."

One of the best forensically recreated recipes out there comes from Kristina Wolter, an Austin, Texas, food stylist who grew up in Northern California and worked in an Orange Julius in the early 1980s, when she could see the label on the bags of powder and they still squeezed fresh oranges. (And you could still add a raw egg to your drink for extra protein and fluff.)

Wolter posted her excellent recipe on her blog in 2012, and it still gets dozens of new comments a year, many of them fond recollections from Orange Julius fans. In addition to orange juice, ice, and simple syrup, it calls for egg white powder, vanilla extract or vanilla powder, and milk powder.

As Wolter and some of her commenters mention, that blend of powders seems awfully close in flavor to what you get from an instant vanilla pudding mix, which has superfine sugar in it already — though most are now made with cornstarch instead of eggs and milk powder. As a lazy cook, I loved that idea, and so I tried blending a few teaspoons of it with some freshly squeezed orange juice and ice. Eureka! I've never been an Orange Julius freak, but I might become one now. (Plus, then you get to make pudding.)

Rachel Wharton has nearly 20 years of experience as a writer, reporter and editor, including 4 years as a features food reporter at the *New York Daily News*. She is a former Deputy Editor of *Edible Manhattan* and *Edible Brooklyn* magazines, and is currently a Senior Writer with *New York Times Wirecutter*. She is also an adjunct professor of food writing with the NYU Food Studies Department.



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**Charles Perry, Learning from Nickie V**  
*Continued from Page 1*

they don't discriminate between wild and domesticated. As a result, there is constant exchange of genetic material between the two worlds, creating an even wider range of cultivated varieties. It is said that every village in Mexico has its own local chile pepper.

A successful plant may spread outside its homeland when travelers take seeds with them or outsiders decide to take some seeds home. But it never occurs to either class of people to try to collect *all* the current varieties – in fact, it would never occur to anybody but a Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov to do such a thing (as he did, to the tune of tens of thousands of samples). As a result of his studies, Vavilov proposed that you can tell where a food plant originated because it will be the place which has the largest number of cultivated varieties, such as purple carrots in Afghanistan, pea-sized green-striped eggplants in Thailand.

You may have guessed where I'm going with this: "recipe" is to culinary reality as cultivated variety is to the wild world. Interesting conclusions can be drawn from this notion. I confess, it's not a perfect analogy – when plant material travels from one place to another, a scientist can confirm the identity, but when an idea pops up somewhere new, it might actually have been invented on the spot.

Still, I think this is a valuable way of looking at things. It can keep us food historians from losing sight of the actual vastness of the subject we're studying. I say, raise a glass the great Nikolai Ivanovich.

**Nancy Zaslavsky, Program Notes**  
*Continued from Page 1*

speaking on Los Angeles. community cookbooks. Suzanne will guide us when we produce our own CHSC community cookbook packed with member's cherished recipes and memories. Liz Pollock talked in May on kitchen appliance manuals and how they tell the colorful story of the metamorphosis of American home kitchens these past 75 years. Bonnie Benwick spoke virtually in June on the history of American food writing, writing styles, and trends— and what's current in media voices.

We're looking forward to a dynamic fall program line up. Please mark your calendar and join us at the Downtown L.A. Central Library the second Saturday of the month, except November 11th when the library will be closed for Veteran's Day and we'll be Zooming the program.

## Interesting Tidbits

**The history of beverages goes far and wide. Unfortunately, with limited newsletter space, we can only feature a few articles, but here are more that we found to be intriguing and important. Perhaps you will, too!**

- **Tiki Bars are built on cultural appropriation and colonial nostalgia. Where's the reckoning?**  
"The nostalgia people express through tiki is offensive because it forgets that this colonialism and militarism is ongoing, not temporary. Not past. Not over."  
<https://www.latimes.com/food/story/2019-11-27/tiki-bar-problems>
- **The Earliest Alcoholic Beverage in the World**  
The oldest chemical evidence of an alcoholic beverage dates back to about 7000 BC inside pottery jars excavated at Jiahu, an early Neolithic village in the Yellow River Valley, Henan province, China.  
<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/504355-oldest-alcoholic-beverage>
- **The Women Left Out of the History of Cocktails**  
"These women probably didn't invent those drinks, but they maybe popularized them. If I were a woman in the late 19th or early 20th centuries, where would I have gotten my recipes?"  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/01/dining/cocktails-women-history.html>
- **10 Lesser-Known Sodas Our Taste Buds Will Never Forget**  
Whether they're discontinued also-rans, hard-to-find regional favorites, or just unsung classics, these are the sodas that have sugared our hearts—perhaps clogging our arteries in the process.  
<https://www.bonappetit.com/drinks/non-alcoholic/slideshow/10-lesser-known-sodas>
- **The oldest bars in Los Angeles**  
From Downtown bars to Hollywood and beyond, these places will let you step back in time for the night—or at least until you've finished a cocktail or three.  
<https://www.timeout.com/los-angeles/bars/oldest-bars-in-los-angeles>
- **16 Everyday Objects That Are Secretly Flasks**  
If you parade around a bottle of whiskey in front of the authorities at your local park or beach, you're sure to get busted. And while we would never condone breaking the rules, there are a few cool, clandestine ways to smuggle in drinks.  
<https://www.thrillist.com/culture/best-secret-flasks-hiding-alcohol>
- **Top 5 Greatest Bar Brawls in American History**  
Stonewall may be the historic bar brawl most on our minds today, but our country has had its share of spectacular tavern fights. Here are five of the greatest. Don't let it give you any ideas this weekend.  
<https://slate.com/culture/2011/07/top-5-greatest-bar-brawls-in-american-history.html>

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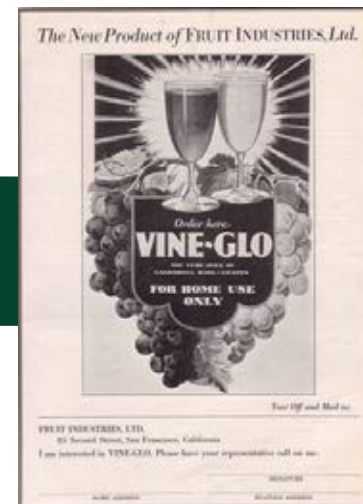


When you think of illicit substances that are shipped in brick form, wine probably doesn't come to mind first. And no, boxed wine doesn't count. During Prohibition, however, drinkers got around laws that banned alcohol by dissolving bricks of grape concentrate in water and fermenting them into wine.

Of course, conscientious makers of grape bricks didn't want to contribute to bad behavior, and responsibly warned buyers that, "After dissolving the brick in a gallon of water, do not place the liquid in a jug away in the cupboard for twenty days, because then it would turn into wine." The makers of the Vino Sano Grape Brick even dutifully indicated what flavors one's careless handling of grape bricks would result in: burgundy, sherry, port, claret, riesling, etc.

I've never tried wine made from grape bricks, but I imagine Wine Spectator would rate it somewhere between vinegar and prison

wine made from mixing grape juice and ketchup packets in a Ziploc bag and letting it ferment on a radiator.



## Prohibition and Wine's Darkest Hour

By Reid Mitenbuler

Prison, of course, seemed like the appropriate landing spot for irresponsible grape brick vintners, but grape bricks were actually a

safe way to avoid restrictive laws. Loopholes in prohibition legislation allowed families to produce 200 gallons per year of fermented fruit juice for home consumption. As long as the wine didn't leave the house, drinkers were safely within legal bounds. Grape brick company Vine-Glo reminded customers that wine made from bricks was "entirely legal in your home, but it must not be transported.

*Loopholes in prohibition legislation allowed families to produce 200 gallons per year of fermented fruit juice for home consumption.*

And home is where most winemaking during Prohibition occurred, often among families originally from southern and eastern European countries with strong winemaking traditions. Established bootleggers largely avoided selling wine in favor of distilled spirits that were more lucrative. A quart of 50-proof gin contained as much alcohol as six bottles of wine and was a lot easier to transport, according to *Last Call*, Daniel Okrent's epic history of Prohibition. Of course, the legal limit of 200 gallons per year left room for a little extra that could be sold to friends and neighbors, helping to more than double wine consumption in the U.S. from 70 million gallons per year in 1917 to 150 million gallons by 1925.

Wine was also lucrative to grape growers—growing grapes was perfectly legal, and shipments headed east from California often clogged the nation's railway networks, prompting expansions at some railyards. Farmers that had succumbed to pressure from Prohibitionists to replace their vines with other crops rushed to replant grapes. The cost of vineyard land went from about \$100 per acre in 1919 to \$500 per acre a year later, and grape prices soared from as low as \$9.50 per ton in 1919 to \$82 in 1921. In 1924 they spiked as high as \$375. One Italian social club in Minnesota, seeking

to acquire grapes for home winemaking, sent a grocer named Cesare Mondavi to California to acquire a suitable supply. Fortune beckoned, and Mondavi quickly abandoned the life of a Minnesota grocer and moved his family, including young son Robert, to the Golden State.

*Most alcoholic beverages of the time were awful (the term "bathtub gin" pretty much says it all), and wine was no exception.*

Unfortunately, this is where wine's Prohibition story takes a familiar turn down the same dark alley where many drinks during the era found themselves. Most alcoholic beverages of the time were awful (the term "bathtub gin" pretty much says it all), and wine was no exception. Many growers, including Julio Gallo, ripped out old grape vines yielding respected varieties such as zinfandel or semillon and replaced them with alicante bouschet, a grape that many vintners rank slightly above ragweed for horticultural pedigree. The reason was because alicante grew in large volumes and had a tough skin that made it easier to ship.

Its dark flesh could also be pressed repeatedly, and after adding a little extra sugar and water it yielded more than double the amount of wine as other grapes.

Vintners who had spent their lives mastering the elusive art of winemaking were aghast at alicante's invasive takeover. At first, alicante grapes fetched high prices, but overplanting created supply that outstripped the vast demand for grapes. The question of what to do with all those excess grapes was addressed by the trade publication California Grape Grower, which helpfully promoted delicacies such as grape ketchup and grape fudge.

By the time Prohibition was repealed in 1933, much damage was done and the California wine industry was largely outfitted to produce lousy wines. When other alcoholic beverages such as distilled spirits and beer began recovering after Repeal, home winemaking plummeted and Americans drank about half of the quantity of wine they'd been drinking before Prohibition.

Perhaps it was all the lousy wine that prompted F. Scott Fitzgerald, perhaps the greatest chronicler of Jazz Age America, to famously state, "There are no second acts in American lives." It took half a century to eventually prove him wrong, but American wine consumption returned to its pre-Prohibition rate by 1975. By that time, California was full of vintners that reprioritized quality over sheer quantity. The now-infamous "Judgment of Paris" was held one year later, in which underrated and overlooked American wines were pitted in a blind taste test against their pedigreed French counterparts. An American wine won, surprising the entire world and creating one of the greatest second acts in America's drinking history.



Reid Mitenbuler is a freelance writer and author of *The Bourbon Empire: The Past and Future of America's Whiskey* (2015). He has written about whiskey and drinking culture for *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, *Saveur*, *Serious Eats*, and *Whisky Advocate*, among others. He lives with his wife and son in Los Angeles.

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Have you noticed how few people drink with pride? Of that small number, almost no one will claim they do it for fun, and fewer still will declare the vital part alcohol plays in their lives. As has been recently noted in this very magazine, the number of Public Figures (our cultural lamp posts, for good or ill) who will own up to their drunken exploits are few, or of marginal importance. Too many people use drunkenness as an excuse, or make excuses for their drunkenness. Something has gone to vinegar here in the Land of the Free.

Our so-called Founding Fathers (where was John Hancock's mother, I ask, with such sloppy penmanship?), usually depicted as a gaggle of sober-minded political theorists and high-hearted revolutionaries, were dedicated, rampant boozers. Granted, a whole different world view guided social discourse in the early days of our nation. Alcohol was respected to a higher degree back then, deemed an important aspect of society. Today it's been relegated to the status of "pastime" or "occasionality".

The Mayflower pitched and yawed across the Big Deep, its passengers longing for a land where they could freely display their beliefs outside the gaze of intrusive Kings and Courts. The scribes of history have

hint we'll make sure it doesn't happen again. Hello? Lord? Isn't this just swell... Makes a fella wish he'd stayed in Derbyshire."

Jonesing for a frothy mug, and having tried and rejected about every foul concoction of the later micro-brew scene, the Colonists faced serious choices. They could A) cease tippling, B) rely on erratic shipments from England, or, C) they could adapt. They chose C. It wasn't as if it was beer or nothing, after all. They adored the stuff, sure, but beer is a rather smallish segment of the whole Alcohol Universe. The unavailability of ale was not a go-home-and-kiss-the-king's-ass sort of problem. The land around them (recently cleansed of "savages") sprouted grains as if fertilized with God's Holy Manure. Everyone planted grain because of its abundant uses, and everyone knew of its delightful penchant for fermenting into spirits. God willing, they'd be mellow, warm-bellied, and swimmy-headed by spring.

A simple decision, yes? Beer, spirits, wine, they all pull the cord of your internal buzz motor, right? So what's the big deal? Just this: the change from beer to spirits was a

# God, Guts, and Rum

by Richard English

spin-doctored the manners and mores of those plucky invaders, glossing over the ickier aspects of Pilgrim Consciousness (with the matte-black finality of a Binx gun), and marketed the remainder as a package of bland aphorisms. As a result, the Pilgrims now seem as clean and sterile as a Bing Crosby movie.

All most people recall about the Pilgrims is the myth of the First Thanksgiving, whereupon our incredibly decent and Godly forebears gave turkey and yams to starving Indians, thereby teaching the ignorant heathens how to make full use of the land (which they'd only lived on for 10,000 years, or so). The fact of the matter is the Pilgrims would have starved to death after rejecting food offered by the "savages," had they not resorted to a little cannibalism. That they also ran out of beer must surely have ruined the First Christmas, too.

But, setting aside their moral frailty for a moment (we shall return), Colonial love for drink is the most telling fact glossed-over as the Pilgrims mutated from Sectarian Hermits to Inviolable Edifices of History. Their affinity for a good buzz is well documented, even if most historians treat it like the Carter's treated Brother Billy, which is to say ignore it because it doesn't fit the concept.

The keepers of America's past have an issue with boozing, but I ask you, is there any difference at all between doing a thing, and doing the identical thing while drunk? If we acknowledge the boozedog nature of our forebears, do we somehow lessen them? Not hardly. Given their post-Plymouth savagery, the fact that they pounded enough liquor to stock a wedding reception at the Kennedy compound is one thing to be said in their favor.

Beer was the intoxicant of choice in the Colonies, just as it had been back in England. Colonists referred to beer as the "Good Creature of God." They knew wine, which had its occasions, and spirits — called, charmingly, "ardent waters" — but beer and ale got them going, primed the Happy Pump, and transformed shoe buckles into a seventeenth-century cousin to Rubik's baffling Cube. They packed thousands of gallons of beer for the voyage — twice as much beer as water, in fact — and love for beer was one tradition from the Isles they left intact.

*One of the first professions to take off in the New World was the sutler, who rode through the land with kegs of whiskey in his wagon, selling intoxicating snorffles far and wide for a penny a dram.*

About a half-second after landfall, urgent attention was given to getting a batch of beer on the cooker. While some folks erected shelter, and others wandered around shooting things, a lucky few searched for beerable plant life. Brewing skills were prized among the Colonists, right up there with a green thumb and a brilliant sermon (not to mention inventing unconscionable exchange rates for wampum). Most households brewed their own, using recipes handed down through many generations, and a person's standing in the community could be linked to the quality of his beverages.

Things didn't start out very well, though, for Colonial brewers. They were shocked — shocked! — and consternated to discover that the "New World" (their little hunk of it, anyhow) didn't exactly teem with quality ingredients. Refusing to be kept from their heart's desire, they set about experimenting with what they had at hand. If it grew — and didn't have hair, fangs, feathers, or scales — it found its way into their trial-and-error brew pots. These included pumpkins, blue berries, milkweed, molasses, and various kinds of bark. None of these, singly or mixed (oak-bark beer...yummy), were at all satisfactory, and after many horrific failures, a small-scale panic set in among the populace.

"First we got cold weather, then red-skinned pagans, then we had to eat John Proctor, and now no ale? We know not what we did to cause thee offense, O Lord, but if you could see your way clear to provide a little



vital first step in the creation of a truly American psyche.

Very few Europeans drank hard liquor. Germans, like the English, preferred beer. The French and Italians were tradition-bound to wine. Mead was popular among Scandinavians (as was anything else that killed the taste of lutefisk), and ciders fermented from apples, dates, plums, or pomegranates, were enjoyed across the European continent.

Standing apart from the aleheads and juicers were Scotland and Ireland, tiny countries, each with a profound taste for liquor. Having been trod upon by the Romans and Anglo-Saxons for dozens of centuries, these folks drank hard liquor to match their hard lives. The Prince of Potables was, of course, whiskey. Ranging from 100 to 200 proof (roughly 30% to 100 percent pure alcohol), whiskey is the 800-pound gorilla of the tippling world. Compared to beer and wine, whiskey is a tiger shark free-swimming through *The Incredible Mr. Limpet*. It's *The Godfather* slap boxing with *Dude, Where's My Car?*.

In the 1600s (and right up to this very instant, actually), the Irish were considered less worthy than the English — fifth-class people in an empire they never asked for. As a result, their cultural creations were largely scorned. Whiskey drinkers were viewed as uncouth, slovenly, and unrefined. The Colonials were somewhat hesitant about lowering themselves to the level of the Irish, but they needed alcohol, and had all the makings, and so went with the flow. Necessity is the mother of sozzlement. Before very long, a party, barn raising, wedding, or simple random Thursday, just wasn't complete without (many) bottles of rye, scotch, or bourbon. Rye and bourbon, derived from wheat, rye, and corn, can lay claim to being among America's first cultural creations. Bourbon is considered the most American of liquors.

As mentioned previously, alcohol consumption was almost inextricable from the larger society. For example, workers throughout the Colonies took morning breaks around eleven. Like we might enjoy coffee and a smoke, the Colonials took a glass of whiskey. "Eleveners," as they were called, were key parts of the workday in a society that knew a stiff drink made for happy, relaxed employees. One of the first professions to take off in the New World was the sutler, who rode through the land with kegs of whiskey in his wagon, selling intoxicating snorffles far and wide for a penny a dram. (The sutler was, obviously, a precursor of the hot dog vendor, but he sold comfort instead of tube-shaped slaughterhouse mung.)

Additionally, workers, tradesmen, and artisans were often paid in liquor. Amounts were standardized. "X" hours of work or completed projects equaled "Y" bottles or casks of whiskey. In a world more self-sufficient than ours, where people farmed or hunted to fulfill their essential needs, what better

*America was erected on pillars of empty kegs and whiskey burps. Drunkenness itself has a 20,000-year lineage, complete with thousands of customs and rituals that span history and the globe.*

currency could you ask for? Wouldn't you, some days, rather have a bottle than a wad of ugly green paper? Sadly, as with many good things, doom cryers scurried up from their disgruntled burrows, saw people having a good time, and cudged the party.

Beginning in the late 1700s, abstinence movements challenged 200 hundred years of Colonial drinking custom. Early prohibitionists apparently felt uneasy about how well boozenomics worked, and decided to dry out the nation. Dozens of rationales were trotted forward to justify their opinions. One group claimed they stood for "home protection." (Sound familiar?) Prohibitionist "unions" kept registers of the abstemious devout, inking a "T" beside the names of those who pledged total abstinence (and, incidentally, birthing the word "teetotaler"). This practice bears a scary resemblance to the data-mining project recently launched by the Justice Department — mass acquisition of personal information destined for use in making moral judgements and as justification for preemptive actions against those who won't play along. If you package all abstemious rationales in a box, wrap it in a pretty bow, and tape a card to the top, the card would read: "We believe that this nation functions according to rules and moral obligations that we understand to be true, defined as we see fit, and followed to the letter, despite any evidence to the contrary."

Prohibitionists, present and past, tend to look upon booze as the Birth Canal of All Evil. To arrive at this conclusion they have to squint their eyes up tight and see only the negative aspects of drunkenness (violence, addiction, etc.), and completely ignore the good parts (camaraderie, revelry, impishness). Intentionally remaining blind to an entire half of any issue is an excellent definition of "irrational thinking." Addlepat, stick-up-the-butt moralizing is a lame and eerie social agenda. Equally repellent is that the prohibition movement came to glisten with the slime of racism and xenophobia. But, hey, anything to save the children, right?

Ideas about the "way things ought to be" are valuable, but not at the expense of devaluing, or ignoring, the way things are. For every horror story told against drink there exist hundreds more celebrating glee, beauty, mysticism, and just plain fun. If you are honest with yourself you can see both sides of the tap handle.

America was erected on pillars of empty kegs and whiskey burps. Drunkenness itself has a 20,000-year lineage, complete with thousands of customs and rituals that span history and the globe. The actions and accidents of the few should not, and cannot, outweigh the joys of the multitude. For all the questionable — and genuinely foul — tenets espoused by the Founders, they still somehow managed to lay the groundwork for a pluralist society. The enemy of pluralism is needless stricture. Its allies are those who take freedom seriously, and who dance to the bass-beat of 100 proof disobedience. Prohibitionist movements (including our grotesquely shrill anti-drug campaigns) play shotgun politics — the weapon is too big for the target. They take aim, indiscriminately blast away, and if some innocent blood is shed, well, that's just what happens. It is what happens when the voices of the loudest minority are given the most attention. Drink proudly, friends. You are among the anointed. You are a lock pick, and a sax solo. When you laugh the sound recapitulates the instant before the Big Bang. To paraphrase Socrates: The under-realized life is not worth living.

Cheers.



*Modern Drunkard is a glossy color periodical humorously promoting the lifestyle of the "functional alcoholic," based primarily in Denver, CO. Included in our ranks are published novelists, filmmakers, English gentlemen, barflies, punk rock musicians, comedians, outright dastards and admitted boozehheads.*

*Have you noticed how few people drink with pride?*

<https://www.foreo.com/mysa/how-alcohol-founded-america/>