Is wine a fruit serving? [1]

Dear Alice,

Since wine is made of grapes, can wine (which is just fermented grape juice) be a serving of fruit? Obviously, you shouldn't get all of your fruit servings of fruit from wine, but if you have one glass of wine per day, one or two days per week, would the wine fulfill one serving of fruit for that day?

Signed,
Five a day

Answer

Dear Five a day,

Eating enough fruits and veggies, and the other food groups while you're at it, can help to keep you healthy, strong, and energetic. Wouldn't it be great if chocolate counted as our daily allowance of legumes, and beer as grains? While these decadent pleasures actually do contain plenty of nutrients, and while wine has benefits in common with its younger incarnation, the grape, it's not quite the same thing.

Both grape juice and red wine contain resveratrol, a plant-based compound, which may reduce the risk of heart disease. Both also contain antioxidants called flavonoids, which may reduce low-density lipoprotein (LDL) otherwise known as "bad" cholesterol, and increase high-density lipoprotein (HDL), the "good" cholesterol. Additionally, studies suggest that drinking either grape juice or red wine can reduce the risk of blood clots, protect blood vessels, prevent atherosclerosis (hardening of arteries), and help to maintain healthy blood pressure. There is less evidence that the potential benefits of wine apply to drinking white or rosé wines.

While this is starting to sound like a big thumbs up for red wine, fruit has nutrients, like loads of fiber, live enzymes, and vitamins and minerals that just aren't present in wine. For that matter, many of them aren't present in juice either? you'd have to eat the fruit itself to get all of them. In addition to not containing all the nutritional value of fruit, wine also contains alcohol, which can pose a stress to the liver, pancreas, and nerve cells over time. Heavy drinkers are also at risk for malnutrition, as alcohol may serve as a caloric substitute for more nutritious foods (like fruit).

For people in good health, regular and moderate wine drinking is usually fine and in fact it may offer some health benefits. But potential health benefits should not necessarily be a
reason to start drinking if you don't already. Studies show that occasional or binge drinkers have a higher mortality rates than those who drink moderately on a regular basis. There are also some people who would do best to stay away from wine altogether. Those who suffer from alcoholism, liver disease, pancreatitis, uncontrolled hypertension, depression, or heart disease may worsen their conditions by drinking alcohol.

The somber news for the cabernet-lovers is that while wine can be good for you if you are already healthy and drink moderately and regularly, the best way to fulfill your five-a-day fruit requirement is still the good old-fashioned way of, well, eating fruit.

If you'd like more nutrition advice on how to tailor your diet, you can make an appointment with a nutritionist.

Bon Appetit!

Alice!

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