

EL CENTRO COLLEGE  
Food and Hospitality Services Institute

RSTO 1319 Enology and Viticulture – Spring 2004  
**(1) CLASS NOTES: Alcoholic Beverages-History**

Definition: ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE: Any potable liquid which contains ethyl alcohol. It may have as little as ½ % (0.05 %) and as much as 95 % alcohol by volume

The ½ % was chosen by the US Government at the time of Prohibition/and its Repeal to define an intoxicating beverage. At ½ %, you will need 4 to 5 Gallons of such beverage to become intoxicated.

**HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

- The exact date when alcoholic beverages were first consumed by humans is debatable.
- About 8,000 to 10,000 BC our early ancestors discovered that **fermented** fruit, or grain, or milk, or rice tasted good or made one happy or both.
- There are references to the bible in both the Old and the New Testaments:
  - (a) Noah...as he settled down after the flood he planted a vineyard and “....drank of the wine.”
  - (b) The first miracle of Jesus Christ involved the wedding at Canaan-where water was turned into wine, and the last meal Jesus had with his Disciples he offered them a cup of wine, which in some Christian Churches it is still offered.
- Early people fermented anything that would ferment – honey, grapes, grains, dates, rice, sugarcane, milk, peppers, berries, sesame seeds, etc.
- Historical records show that grapes were cultivated as early as 6,000 BC both in the Middle East and in Asia. Egyptians as well as Chinese were tending their vines at about the same time.

- The Greeks are reported to have learned their **viticulture** knowledge from the Egyptians and began to make wine around 2,000 BC -- this is the beginning of the development of alcoholic beverages in the West (Europe).

The Greeks discovered the art of **aging** wine in cylindrical vessels known as **amphorae**. They were made of clay and were remarkably airtight.

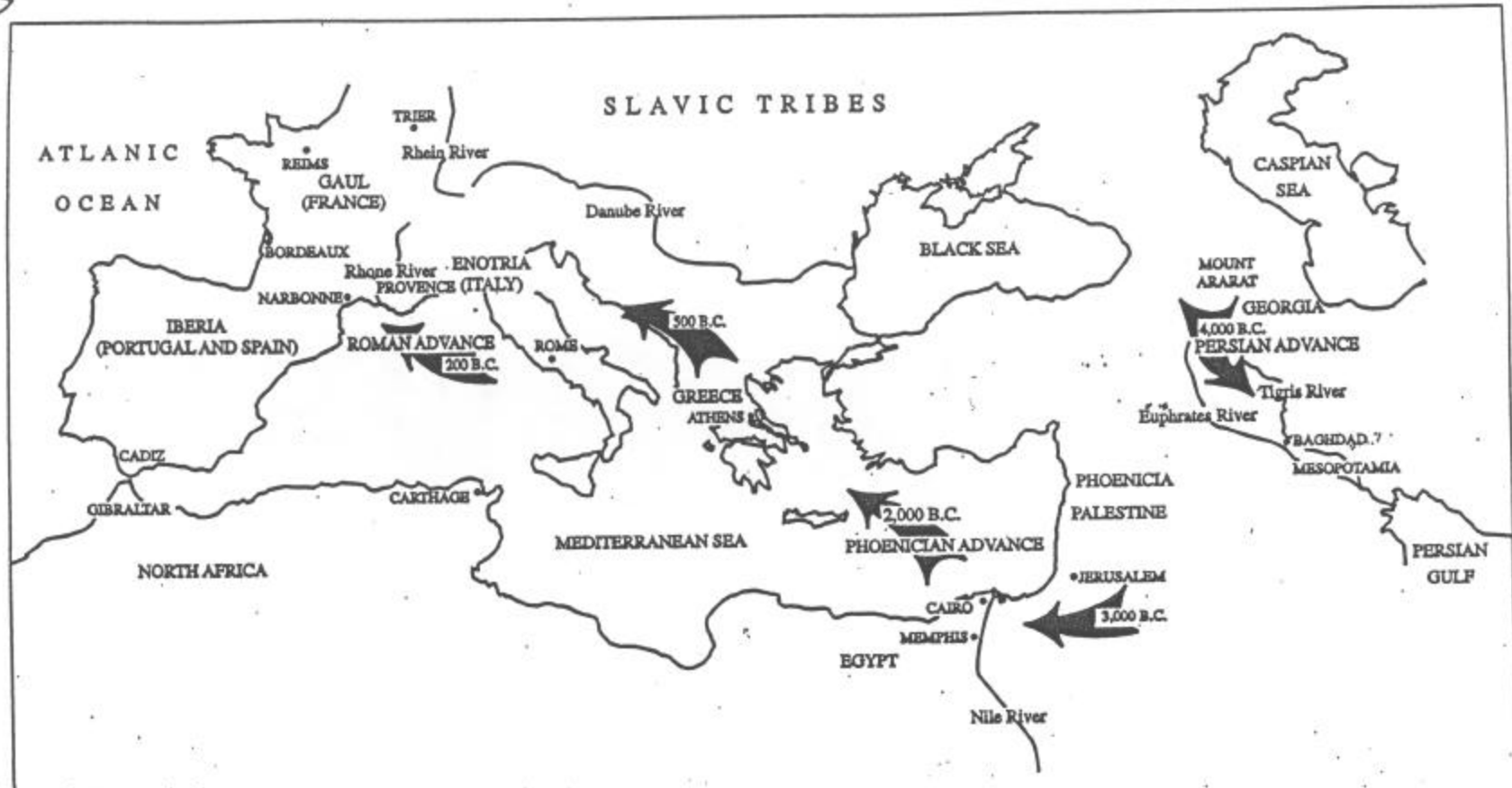
- As Greeks colonized the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, we find grapevines around 1,000BC in Sicily, Lower Italy, and North Africa. By 500 BC vines were found in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain/Portugal), Southern France, and even Southern Russia (the Black Sea area).
- Conquering Saracens(Arab) tribes in the Middle Ages brought both winemaking and distilling skills to Europe, i.e. Spain. In fact, the word “alcohol” and “still” are Arabic in origin.
- As the Roman Empire spread it brought grapes to Northern Europe. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church was the most prominent promoter of viticulture in Europe.
- The first corked bottle of wine is credited to the Portuguese-when they shipped corked bottles of wine to England instead of barrels. The date was 1780 and the cork remains with us to this date. But there is a lively debate about its usefulness.
- In many cultures people have associated intoxicating beverages with wisdom:
  - (a) Early Persians discussed all matters of importance twice: once sober and again after drinking, according to Herodotus.
  - (b) Saxons in ancient England opened their council meetings by pouring and drinking a large stone cup of beer.
  - (c) The Greeks held their famous **symposiums**-their famous philosophical discussions during the hours of after dinner drinking.....the word means drinking together.

- (c) The Roman historian Pliny is credited with the epigram:  
“**In vino veritas**” which means “**in wine there is truth**”.
- Alcoholic beverages were often combined with herbs as medicines and tonics. Up to about a century ago this was the recipe for disease prevention. However, the most common use of alcoholic beverages was as FOOD. Bread and ale or bread and wine was a common food for most ordinary persons.
  - Alcoholic beverages were considered the only beverage fit to drink. Household water was commonly polluted and milk was suspect of causing TB. Beer, and wine were disease free, tasty and thirst quenching, in cultures where food was preserved with salt.
  - Both wines and grapevines were imported to the New World from Europe in the 1700s. However there were native vines found in North America. Thomas Jefferson, who was US Ambassador to France during the American Revolution, attempted in vain to grow vines in his native Virginia.
  - The Spaniards brought vines to Mexico And the first winery in the New World is in Mexico-near Monterrey.
  - Until the 1800s wine was not much in demand in the USA-beer, rum and then whisky were in demand. When early Italian immigrants came to the USA they brought their skills and their wine drinking culture to the USA-especially to California. There a blend of Italian immigrants and Spanish missionaries combined to plant the seeds of today’s mighty California wine industry.
  - The **Tavern** is a European “institution” – a place to enjoy life, to socialize, to discuss ideas, to be stimulated. The beverages served there intensifies the pleasure, loosened the tongue, sparkle the wit, -- and as Socrates said it “....moistened the soul.”

- As time went on the tavern took many forms: inns, pubs, cabarets, dance halls, meeting halls, bodegas etc. Groups began to gather at their favorite place to talk and gossip.
- Immigrants brought the idea of the tavern to the New World. The tavern was considered essential in establishing towns in New England and elsewhere. Often a tavern was built near the church, so that parishioners could warm up quickly after Sunday service which were held in unheated meeting houses.
- It was in taverns that the spirit of the American revolution was born. The secret rendezvous for rebels were often held there. The Boston Tea Party was planned in Hancock Tavern and Paul Revere and his pals watched the movement of the British army from the Green Dragon Tavern. In Williamsburg, Virginia the Raleigh Tavern was the meeting place for Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson. George Washington gave his farewell address to his officers at Fraunces Tavern in New York City.
- As Americans pushed westward, taverns sprang up along the entire route of expansion. A major development was the “inn.” Here we see a hotel-sleeping rooms upstairs and a barroom downstairs. Some of these hotels have historical connections-here in Texas the Menger Hotel in San Antonio is the place where Teddy Roosevelt recruited his rough riders.
- Meanwhile, as the West expanded, taverns became places where disorderly conduct was the norm and society began to look for ways to curb the use of alcoholic beverages.
- This societal movement went by the name of **Temperance**-its target was the “ardent spirits” i.e. e. distilled spirits. Soon the movement gained momentum and it included beer and wine and from temperance and moderation we moved into total **Prohibition**.

- In a century long debate and stringent propaganda the nation was split between the “wets” and the “drys”. There was the belief that if you outlawed alcoholic beverages, sin would disappear and utopia will emerge. This fundamental belief emerged with the notion that those engaged in the production and sale of alcoholic beverages, were on the devil’s side – in the battle between Good and Evil.
- This hot debate was fueled by the proliferation of saloon operated by competing breweries to push their products. By the late 1800s there was a swinging door saloon on every corner of both large cities and small town America. These establishments became places for many illegal activities including gambling and prostitution.
- The Prohibition movement was also an expression of religious and ethnic antagonism. The fundamentalist middle America versus the new German and Irish Catholic immigrants. The brewers were German and the bartenders were Irish, and both brought with them a culture that included alcoholic beverage consumption as part of every day life.
- During World War I – the “drys” passed through the Congress the **18<sup>th</sup> Amendment** to the US Constitution. It prohibited the “manufacture, sale, transportation and importation of intoxicating liquors” in the United States and its territories. Forty six of the forty eight states ratified the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment and went into effect in 1920.
- Prohibition had a short and unhappy tenure – not quite 14 years. There was no way to control the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. Illegal operations such as “speakeasies”- where liquor was served illegally and “moon shiners” and “bootleggers” where liquor was manufactured illegally flourished throughout the country.

- There was also an illegal supply of products coming in from Canada and Mexico and from off shore ships known as “Rum Rows” which sold to small fast boats which brought the alcoholic beverages to shore.
- Ironically, rather than decreasing drinking, Prohibition seemed to invite it. In New York City in the late 1920s there were over 32,000 “speakeasies” – twice the number of stores prior to Prohibition.
- Organized crime took over the bootleg business in many cities. Gangsters quickly became rich, powerful, and seemingly immune to the law.
- Finally with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 Congress passed the **21<sup>st</sup> Amendment** to the US Constitution to repeal Prohibition. But the “wet” vs. “dry” controversy has never ended. Control of the manufacture and distribution/sale of alcoholic beverages was given to the states, counties, towns and precincts, resulting in a mishmash of local liquor laws, known as “**local option**”- that has made America into a “wet” and “dry” checker board.
- There is a resurgence of the movement to impose tougher laws because drunken driving accidents take hundreds of lives each year and some 10% of drinkers become alcohol addicts.
- Furthermore, Americans as a whole are “drinking less” but “drink better”. The lifestyle change where the focus is on health, fitness, and job success, has caused alcoholic beverage sales to decrease – the consumer is now a moderate drinker-limiting their intake to one or two drinks per day and very much interested in the quality of what they drink.



ATLANTIC OCEAN

SLAVIC TRIBES

CASPIAN SEA

BLACK SEA

MOUNT ARARAT

GEORGIA

4,000 B.C. PERSIAN ADVANCE

Tigris River

Euphrates River

BAGHDAD

MESOPOTAMIA

PERSIAN GULF

PHOENICIA PALESTINE

2,000 B.C. PHOENICIAN ADVANCE

JERUSALEM

EGYPT

MEMPHIS

CAIRO

Nile River

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

GREECE ATHENS

ROME

ENOTRIA PROVENCE (ITALY)

ROMAN ADVANCE 200 B.C.

NARBONNE

Rhone River

BORDEAUX

GAUL (FRANCE)

REIMS

TRIER

Rhein River

Danube River

IBERIA (PORTUGAL AND SPAIN)

CADIZ

GIBRALTAR

NORTH AFRICA

CARTHAGE