

MATSON MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

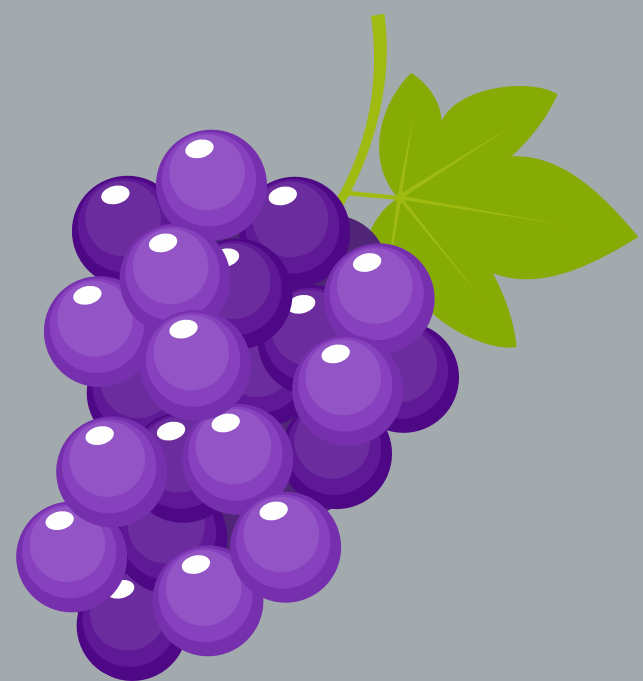
UNCORKING THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF ALCOHOL

Numbers on pages are associated with items in case



Overview

In the Neolithic (10,000–4,500 BC), people in Mesopotamia began to live in permanent villages and grow grains. Soon, they were brewing beer from barley. Around the same time, people in Asia and Eurasia fermented grapes and other warm-climate fruits to make wine. Alcoholic beverages were advantageous because of their high nutritional value. They were also safer to consume than drinking water since alcohol is uninhabitable to most harmful germs. Alcohol consumption quickly became a widespread practice. In addition to its potability and high nutritional value, cultures ranging from ancient China and Egypt to 19th century Europe and highland Peru have also attributed religious, political, and social meanings to alcohol. On display are images and objects that reflect the importance of alcohol in cultures, past and present, around the world.



1. Egyptian Tomb Painting About Wine

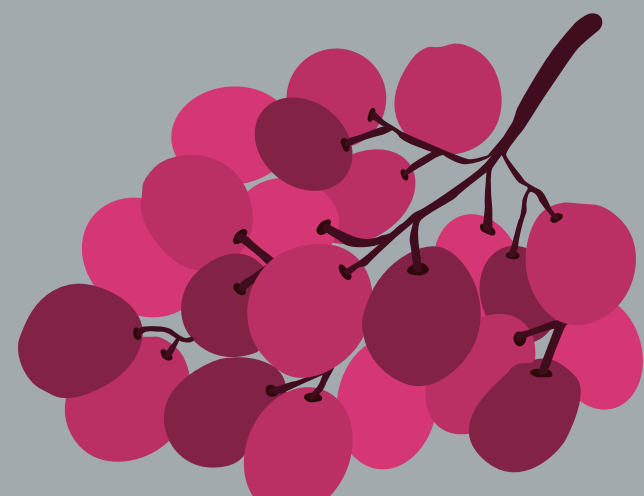
In ancient Egypt, barley was grown so widely that many households made their own beer. Beer was so common that it was not considered an appropriate offering to the gods. Instead, wine production was a valuable, costly, and labor-intensive enterprise overseen by skilled viticulturists. Scribes recorded brewing with a specific hieroglyph for "brewer."

On display is a photograph of an ancient Egyptian tomb mural depicting the grape harvest and wine production. The Egyptians began growing grapes in the Nile Valley delta region around 2700 BC. during the Early Dynastic Period. Each container was dated by the year of a pharaoh's reign and marked according to the name and location of the vineyard, the viticulturist, and the quality of the product. The Egyptians classified the wine by its attributes, quality, flavor, and intensity. Due to its cost, wine became a status symbol. The elites were buried with wine to facilitate their journey to the underworld.



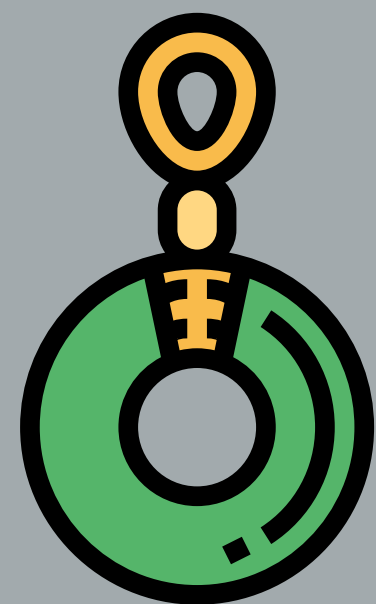
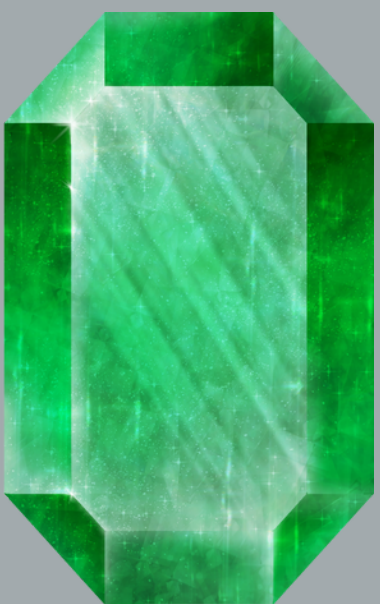
2. Pompeii Carving Of A Popinae

Ancient Romans considered wine so essential to their way of life that the production of wine spread broadly across the empire to supply soldiers and colonists. The Romans celebrated this drink in songs and poetry and depicted its consumption in frescoes and carvings, like the one shown in the photograph on display. The Romans offered wine to Jupiter to ensure success in battle and adopted the Greek wine god, Dionysus, renaming him Bacchus. Romans drank wine at home or at bars called *popinae* which served various wines accompanied by food such as olives, breads, and stews. Unlike the Egyptians, the Romans considered it barbaric to drink wine at full strength, so they diluted it with water. While wealthy Romans could afford high-quality wine, the working class only had access to low-quality wines or beer. Enslaved people and peasants drank other beverages, including a bitter brew called *lora*, made by soaking grape skins and stalks in water until it fermented, and *posca*, a mixture of water and vinegar. Peasants avoided stomping grapes too heavily so that there was enough juice left on the used grapes for their *lora*.



3. Chinese Jade Wine Cups and Poem

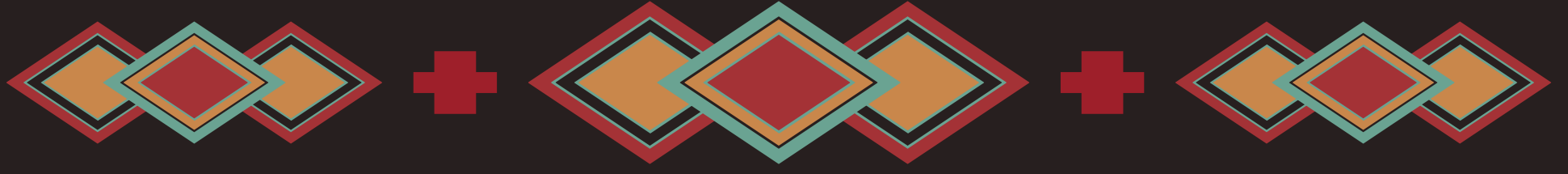
At the site of Jiahu in China, fragments of jars dating to 7,000 B.C. yielded traces of a drink made of fermented rice, honey and grapes. Archaeologists also discovered sealed bronze vessels dating to the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.) that contained wine flavored with herbs and flowers or tree resin. It is probable that Chinese elite drank wine from jade cups, like the ones on display. Both wine and jade carried deep meaning in Chinese society. Starting in the Chou Dynasty (2000-771 B.C.), jade objects were an integral part of burial ritual and court ceremonies. Use of jade was restricted to rulers, princes and officials. In poetry and art, jade symbolized the five virtues of a gentleman: benevolence, bravery, integrity, intelligence, and trustworthiness. During the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907), the famous poet Li Bai wrote the poem on display that celebrated the consumption of wine and its role in establishing social relations. Today, consumption of alcohol is important in China. Businessmen believe that drinking together establishes strong bonds. In fact, the more drunk you get together, the stronger the ties become.



4. Ancient Mesopotamian Drinking Cups

In ancient Mesopotamian temples and palaces, deities received offerings of beer, and rulers demanded beer as tribute. The Sumerians recorded instructions for making 20 different beers from barley, dates and berries, which they exported up to 1000 km away. Engraved on a 6,000-year-old Sumerian tablet was an image of people drinking what is most likely beer from a communal bowl through straws. Because of the bitter residue in beer, people drank through filtering straws. In the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh from the third millennium B.C., the hero Enkidu became a civilized human by consuming beer and bread. Sumerians developed different classes of beer that varied in quality and cost. Archaeologists believe that wine arrived in Mesopotamia around 3300 B.C. as an import. Because grapes could not grow in this region, only upper classes could afford it. In contrast, barley, dates and berries grew in abundance, so Sumerian beer became an important social drink and source of nutrition. People at Babylon consumed alcoholic beverages from cups, like the ones on display that date from the third to the second millennium B.C.

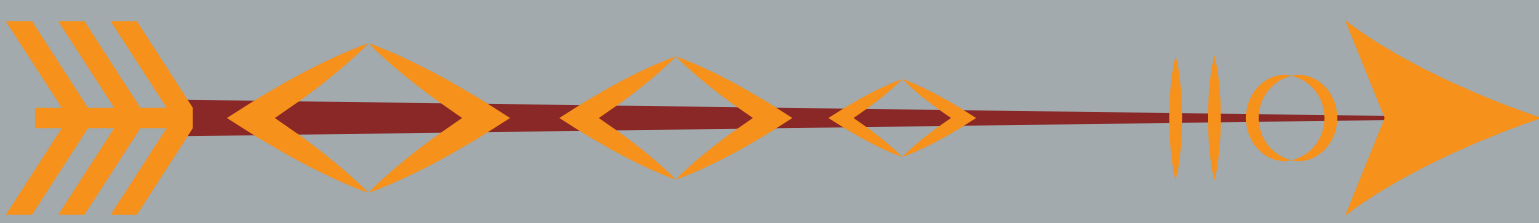




5. Colonial Incan Kero

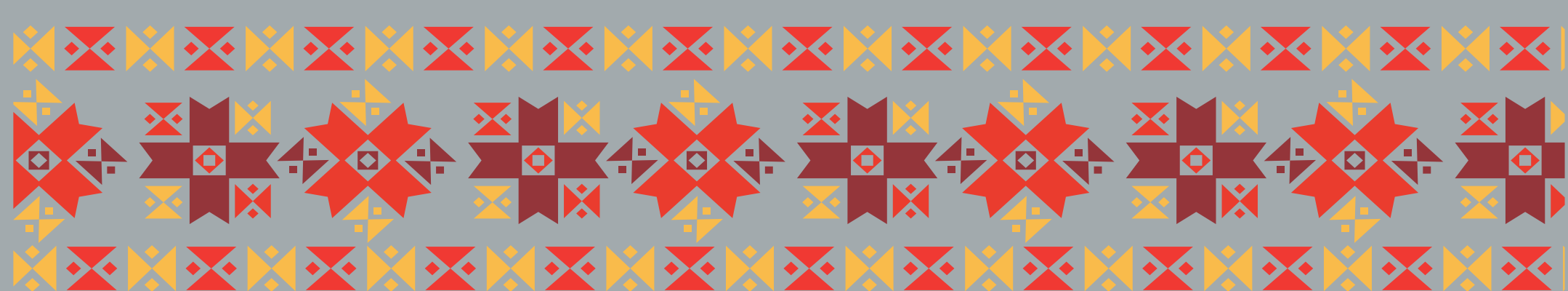
The use of elaborately decorated drinking cups became common during the prehistoric Tiwanaku culture (A.D. 400-1000) of Peru. The Inca (A.D. 1450 -1534) before and after the Spanish Conquest used these vessels to serve chicha, a fermented corn alcohol drink, in religious and political ceremonies. Kero were traditionally used in pairs for a ritual exchange between two people to create bonds of loyalty. Elite Incans used them in rituals to reaffirm their faith in their gods. During this exchange, the presenters would hold the vessels at the waist, partially obscuring the images. Only the uppermost register would have been completely visible. On display is a wooden kero that dates to the Colonial period, based on the use of pigmented resin inlays to decorate the entire exterior surface. Kero were made with precious metals, ceramics or wood, depending on the wealth and status of the owner. Although the Spanish destroyed many kero to stop pagan rituals, the Inca changed the designs sufficiently to satisfy Spanish sensibilities.





6. Aztec Codex Pulque Drinking

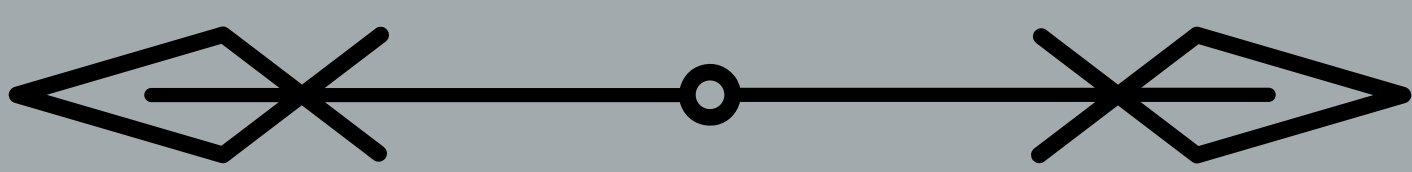
The illustration from an Aztec Codex, a book written by pre-Columbian and colonial Aztecs, shows a god drinking pulque from a large vessel. Pulque is made from the maguey plant, a very sacred plant in ancient Mexico. The large figure drinking through a straw is Tepoztecatl, the god of pulque, drunkenness and fertility. He was a child of Mayahuel, the goddess who created maguey. This sacred drink was consumed by priests, nobles, and sacrificial victims during religious rituals and celebrations of victory in battle. To make pulque, people remove the heart of the mature maguey plant and scrape the walls of the hole left by the heart, which causes sap to flow. Traditionally, people sucked the sap out of a jar using a bottle gourd and may have drunk it from cups, like the one on display. After the Spanish conquest, pulque largely lost its sacred meaning as Christianity spread. Despite changing attitudes toward pulque, the consumption of this drink increased after the conquest until the early 1900s when some 1,000 pulquerias, bars specializing in pulque, were operating in Mexico City. Competition from other types of alcohol reduced the consumption of pulque during the 20th century.



7. Northern European Medieval Beer Cup

The cool climate of northern Europe favored barley and beer production. The oldest direct evidence of beer in Germany comes from beer residue dating to 800 B.C., although scholars believe beer was most likely brewed earlier in the Neolithic period. In ancient times, On display are two replicas of Medieval beer cups. Until about A.D. 1000, women were in charge of household brewing. Once the Catholic Church made inroads into the region, monasteries and commercial brewers became heavily involved in beer production and sales. Monks grew barley and brewed large quantities of beer to drink and sell. Monasteries reserved their high-quality beer for upper class and royalty patrons, selling an inferior brand to convents and working-class people. By the 16th century, political leaders exercised power over the quality and use of beer. In 1516, Duke Wilhelm IV of Bavaria enacted a law that dictated specific ingredients and price limits. In the 17th century, the influx of spirits and coffee threatened the commercial success of beer. To counter the success of other drinks, King Wilhelm IV of Bavaria proclaimed in 1777 that "my people must drink beer. the King does not believe that coffee-drinking soldiers can... beat his enemies in war'. His edict persuaded Germans to return to their old beer drinking habits. Today, they view beer as the most wholesome of drinks.





8. Viking Drinking Horn

Ancient northern Europeans drank from various containers, including vessels fashioned from bovid horns, like the Danish reproduction on display. For centuries in Eurasia and northern Europe, people drank from horns daily and during important gatherings, celebrations, and rituals. The oldest evidence of drinking horns comes from first millennium B.C. Iron Age stone pictographs and remains in ancient burial sites.

Archaeologists recovered horn fragments from the famous Anglo-Saxon Sutton Hoo burial site dating to the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. There are also drinking horns featured on the Bayeux Tapestry, which depicts events around the 1066 Norman conquest of England.

Most people probably associate drinking horns with the Vikings of Scandinavia. In the Sagas, Vikings drank mead (made of fermented fruit or honey) or beer from horns to establish alliances between guests and hosts. In the famous poem Beowulf, guests were served mead in horns. Although most of the horns were unadorned, artisans sometimes decorated them with engraved plates of silver or other fine metals.





10. Colonial American Jug

New World colonists not only brought beer with them, they also retained the belief that beer was essential to good health. Eventually, colonists began to brew their own beer, despite attempts by the British to ban the production of stoneware pottery in the American colonies, which were used to store and serve beer. In 17th century America, many people from all classes drank beer in taverns. Functioning as hotels and restaurants as well as bars, taverns became hubs for social, economic and political activity. Within a few generations, class-specific taverns sprang up in major cities. Upper-class taverns often served expensive imported wine and beer, even after local production took off. Not surprisingly, Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence at the Indian Queen Tavern in Philadelphia. As a young man, Benjamin Franklin conducted business in such places. Franklin was so impressed (or mortified) by the ubiquity of alcohol consumption that he came up with over 200 terms for being under the influence of alcohol.



11. Shipibo Serving Vessel

In pre-Columbian times, many South Americans made an alcoholic beverage called chicha. To brew chicha, they first boiled maize kernels or manioc. Then they chewed the boiled residue into a mash, mixed it with water, and let it sit in large jars or vats. Enzymes in the saliva instigated fermentation, which continued until the drink acquired the desired strength. Living on the Upper Ucayli River near the headwaters of the Amazon on the eastern slopes of the Peruvian Andes, the Shipibo make chicha from manioc or maize in the traditional manner. They also brew a drink called masata from sweet potatoes. These drinks are an important source of daily nutrients and are consumed in great quantities at communal festivals. Women not only brew these beverages, they also make elaborately decorated ceramic vessels, like the one on display, to produce and serve chicha. The intricate polychrome designs once conveyed beliefs about their community and its relationship to the environment and the cosmos beyond the village. Women acquired the designs, call quenea, from hallucinogenic visions.



12. Turkish Canakkale Wine Vessel

Archaeologists have discovered traces of wine production on 7,000-year-old pottery. In the second millennium B.C., the Hittites offered libations of wine to the gods during rituals and passed laws protecting viticulture. When Muslims who condemned alcohol use expanded into Anatolia (Turkey) in the late 11th century, wine was still produced by Non-Islamic vintners. In the 17th century, the Ottoman Empire prohibited wine production. The phylloxera pest in the 19th century destroyed many of Europe's vineyards so vineyards in Turkey thrived. The wine jug on display dates to the peak production of wine in Turkey. It was made in Canakkale, an important port city, famous for ceramics which were bought as souvenirs. Although, an 18th century Londoner stated that a Canakkale jug was "certainly the ugliest thing I have ever saw in my life". What do you think?



14. Hungarian Tokaji Wine Jug & Harvest Scene

As early as the 16th century, Hungarians produced a sweet dessert wine called tokaji aszu. Treaties and agreements were often sealed by drinking wine, an act called a wine blessing. In the 19th century, Hungarians greeted guests with wine served in pitchers called bokaly, like the one on display. It became so popular that it is even mentioned in the Hungarian national anthem,

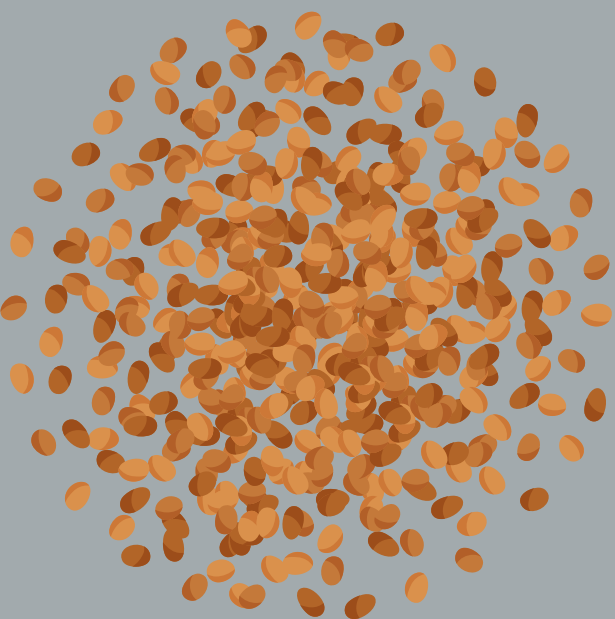
“On tokaj’s vine stalks you dripped nectar”

Hungarians produce exceptional wines because of the nutrient-rich volcanic soils at the base of the Carpathian Mountains, as well as the region’s mild climate and abundant sunshine. Hungarians are so proud of their wine that they hold large wine festivals in September and October. Harvesting wine in Hungary was a social event, as captured in the drawing of the harvest on display.



15. Ethiopian Tella Cup, Painted Plate, and Mesob

Ethiopians brew a brown, malted drink called tella. Each family has their own unique tella recipe that they pass down from generation to generation. Household production is not standardized and alcohol content can vary from 2-8%. Although this beverage can be made with barley, millet, maize, or sorghum, the most commonly used grain is a local crop called teff. Most families drink home-brewed tella daily. Ethiopians consider it polite to provide this beverage to guests, filling their cup to the brim and offering refills. They serve tella in earthenware like the cup on display. Tella also plays an important role in ancient rites unique to Ethiopian Christians. Ethiopian Christians celebrate a festival that combines the Feast of Epiphany with the Feast of St. Michael. The day before, they brew tella, bake bread, and slaughter sheep. The next day they celebrate with a religious procession and a great feast. As depicted on the painted plate, food is served from platters on pedestal led baskets called mesobs, like the one on top of the case.



16. Spanish Botija & Bucaro

Wine production in Spain started between 6,000 and 5,000 years ago. Under Roman rule from the 1st-3rd centuries, Spanish wine was widely traded across the empire. In the 19th century, the phylloxera pest destroyed French vineyards and drove vintners to Spain. Spain's wine industry took off until the pest reached Spain in the 20th century.

The Spanish civil war in the 1930s halted wine production even further. After WWII, the Spanish reestablished their vineyards. Today, Spain is the third largest wine producing country. Wine has become a necessary complement to Spanish meals. In public, the habit of eating tapas (small savory dishes) at bars always includes the consumption of wine or beer. The liquid containers on display date to 1900 A.D. On the left is. Water or wine container, called a botija, from Tirana, Spain. To the right is a bucaro or wine cask from Andujar.

The cask has a filter in the spout to keep contaminants out of the wine.



17. Italian Wine Jar & Funnel

Thanks to favorable climates and soil conditions, wine production has proved to be the most successful in the Mediterranean regions of southern Europe. Today, Italy produces more types of wine (3,800) than any other country. In jars like the one on display from the 20th century, Italians from Orvieto stored and served liquids such as wine, water, or olive oil. The ceramic wine funnel, purchased in Rome, was used to aerate, oxidize, and thereby improve the flavor of wine. Many peasants worked on estates of rich landowners. For centuries, Italians have considered wine a healthy drink with medicinal properties. Ancient philosophers believed red wine was good for digestion and disinfecting wounds. White wine soothed bladder problems and sped up healing. 19th century peasants viewed wine as a bracing tonic for hard workers. Today, Italians consider wine an integral part of family meals, offering young children a small amount of wine mixed with water. Wine is consumed at cafes and serve as community centers to play games, have group meetings, and talk about news of the day.



18. Bartmann or Bellarmine Jug

Bellarmino jugs are salt-glazed jugs that were first made in Northern Europe during the 16th century. Such jugs were desirable because of their durable, non-porous paste that was easy to clean. Germans poured wine from casks into these jugs to decant the drink before drinking it. However, people occasionally used these jugs for a more sinister purpose. Calling them “witches bottles”, they would seal objects in the jugs and bury them to deflect curses. Like the one on display, these vessels were often imprinted with medallions that record the coat-of-arms of patrons, cities, royal houses, or a potter’s own symbol. The most distinctive feature of this jug is the bearded face on the exterior. Many believe that 17th century Protestants who were angered by the anti-reformist policies of Cardinal Bellarmine, fashioned the face in the Cardinal’s likeness to mock him. Bellarmine is famous for his efforts to squash Galileo’s discoveries. Other vessels before Bellarmine were called Bartmann, meaning “bearded men”.



19. Dutch Gin Bottle & English Cartoon

By 1700, every sizable town in northwest Europe boasted distilled liquor production. In Holland and England, an important ingredient to several popular liqueurs was juniper. As early as the 11th century, monks treated illnesses such as the Black Death, with this plant. One juniper-based liquor, called genever, was a favorite among sailors of the Dutch East and West India Companies who introduced the beverage wherever they came ashore. In fact, The Dutch Low Countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, and Netherlands) were the first to support large-scale distilling. On display are two traditional genever stoneware bottles. Following the Thirty Years' War, English soldiers developed a taste for genever after witnessing "Dutch courage" that the drink lent. Laws were enacted that greatly increased access to gin. As a result, in the 18th century, gin became a popular drink among the lower classes. It led to widespread alcoholism among adults and children. On display is a cartoon that captures the outrage and concern over the public health risk posed by gin in England.



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