



# Chicago Tribune



Enjoy delicious hot drinks – like gourmet coffees, lattes and cappuccinos – at the touch of a button.



DISCOVER TASSIMO AND SAVE \$20

### Top headlines

[Moseley Braun praises rescuers](#)

[More cars call for help](#)

[Illinois' 7 wonders named](#)

[New: Tank Johnson pleads guilty in gun possession case](#)

[New: 5 convicted in London plot](#)

### Celebrity sightings



[News](#) | [Photos](#) | [Movies](#)  
• ['Star Wars' anniversary](#)

### Images in the news



[The day](#) | [Photo page](#)  
Sponsored by [Ritz Camera](#)

### The latest from ChicagoSports.com

[Cubs](#) | [Sox](#) | [Bears](#)  
[Bulls](#) | [Fire](#) | [Blackhawks](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Forums](#)

Please [register](#) or [log in](#) Subscribers: [Get the Advantage](#)

Search:

[chicagotribune.com](#) >> [Living](#) >> [Magazine](#)

### THE FOOD AND WINE ISSUE

## Aging well

### HEARD ON THE GRAPEVINE: AMERICANS' WINE IQ IS SOARING

BY MICHAEL AUSTIN. Michael Austin is a frequent contributor to the Magazine  
*Published April 29, 2007*

WHEN YOU SEE A WINE DISPLAY at the entrance of a 7-Eleven in Lincoln Park, a display featuring pinot noirs and sauvignon blancs in regular-size bottles--not the Ernest & Julio Gallo jugs of yore--you can safely conclude, among other things, that interest in wine is up. Maybe that wine is not the best in the world, and maybe it is not the worst. But it is there, within arm's reach of S.O.S. pads and Vicks NyQuil, and that alone says plenty.

Once the domain of the erudite and the wealthy--and in some cases those were the same people--advanced wine knowledge and collecting has made its way to the masses.

[E-mail this story](#)

[Printable format](#)

[Search archives](#)

[RSS](#)  [RSS](#)

"Wine is becoming more a part of our culture now," says Kevin Mohalley,

owner and wine director of Knightsbridge Wine Shoppe and Epicurean Centre Ltd. in Northbrook. "It's for everyday enjoyment."

This is undoubtedly true if you look at housing trends--cellars are popping up everywhere in new homes--or statistics published by the

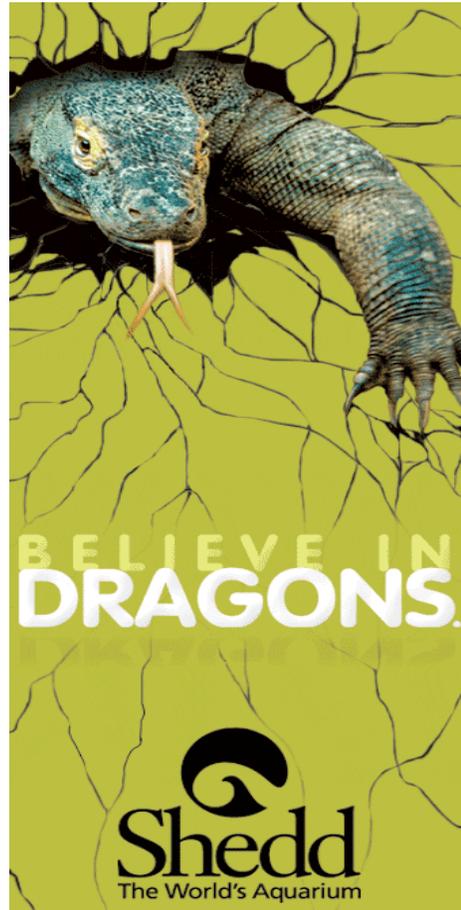
Wine Institute, an advocacy group of California wineries. According to the Institute, when money flows, so does wine. There was a spike in wine consumption in the U.S. during the go-go 1980s, and then a tapering off in the mid-1990s. In the 2000s consumption rose again, hitting an all-time high in 2005, the latest statistic-year available. We guzzled 703 million gallons of wine that year, or 2.37 gallons per person.

Bull markets certainly play a role, especially on the higher end of the wine spectrum, but the biggest factor affecting all other wines, which is to say, the majority of wines worldwide, is availability. The availability and affordability of decent wines today is unprecedented, and something that would have been difficult to predict even 20 years ago when most Americans were absentmindedly ordering "red," "white" or "white zinfandel," which was somewhere in between. And, thank Bacchus, that swill is gone.

"The average quality of wine has improved at all price points," says Stephen Bachmann, founder and CEO of Vinfolio, an online wine store and cellar management business. "But if you specifically focus on the lower price points, there have been dramatic improvements."

What this means is, even if you have only \$10 to spend, you should be able to score a decent bottle of wine. Affordable air travel has brought the famed wine regions of the world closer to us too. Who has not resolved in Europe that the moment they touch down at O'Hare their life will begin anew, filled with trips to the grocery store on a motor scooter, and long lunches of olives, cheese, crusty bread and wine? You know who you are.

It cannot be overlooked that the more we hear about the health benefits of drinking red wine, the more we think of it as good medicine. However,



BELIEVE IN DRAGONS.

**Shedd**  
The World's Aquarium

## CHICAGO top jobs

[Branch Administrator](#)  
[read more & apply](#)

[Servers & Bartenders: Full time](#)  
[read more & apply](#)

[Administrative Assistant](#)  
[read more & apply](#)

[General Office](#)

health benefits could never outweigh the romance and mystery--the real lure--of wine.

That X factor is trickling down to a new generation of young consumers who are as comfortable identifying the floral qualities of chardonnay as they are sending text messages.

"They are the first generation who grew up with their parents choosing wine over any other beverage," says Belinda Chang, director of wine and spirits at Tramonto's Steak & Seafood and RT Lounge at the Westin Chicago North Shore hotel in Wheeling.

To people of a certain (more advanced) age, wine still carries a certain cachet, an air of Old World sophistication. But being a wine snob, and feeling awkward about trying to fake one's way through a wine list, is foreign to the youngest segment of the wine-drinking population.

"The kids in their 20s ask a lot more questions than anyone else," Chang says. "They're never afraid to say that they don't know something."

They also know, like anyone else interested in wine, that the best way to learn about the stuff is to drink it. And that is a win-win, no matter where your interest lies.

- - -

A tasting of three wine clubs

1. Zaca Mesa Winery. This Santa Barbara, Calif., wine producer concentrates exclusively on the grapes of France's Rhone Valley (syrah, grenache, viognier, and others), and Bill Clinton served Zaca Mesa syrah to French President Jacques Chirac at the White House. Members of the Zaca Mesa Cellar Club receive four annual shipments of three bottles each, a newsletter and invitations to special events. [www.zacamesa.com](http://www.zacamesa.com), 800-350-7972 ext. 309.

2. AvalonWine.com. Wines of the Pacific Northwest are the focus of Avalon, an online business offering several club options. Members receive monthly wine shipments, a newsletter, email alerts on sought-after releases and a concierge service for ordering directly from Oregon wineries, or setting up tours. 541-752-7418.

3. Oriel Wines. For drinkers still trying to identify their likes and dislikes, or expand their repertoire, Oriel offers 29 wines made by critically acclaimed winemakers in 24 regions around the world, all under the Oriel label. The monthly wine club Orbit features two to four new wines per month, with discounts on reorders. [www.orielwines.com](http://www.orielwines.com), 212-242-6783.

Finding the perfect bottle

Any wine merchant will sell you the bottles on his shelf, but some will go beyond that and help you find exactly what you're seeking. "Look for somebody who listens twice as much as they speak," says Kevin Mohalley, who offers wine consulting at Knightsbridge Wine Shoppe in Northbrook. "Sometimes, because of a lack of wine vocabulary, some consumers know what they want but don't know how to say it. We can translate for them and start tasting through some wine to figure out what they're looking for." High-end wine sellers like Mohalley also have more contact with winemakers than the average merchant. "Within nine months recently I've been back and forth to Burgundy four times," Mohalley says. Knightsbridge, 824 Sunset Ridge Road, Northbrook, 847-498-9300, [knightsbridgewine.com](http://knightsbridgewine.com).

Copyright © 2007, [Chicago Tribune](#)

[read more & apply](#)

[General Office](#)

[read more & apply](#)

[Pressroom Supervisors,](#)

[I-Gen Operators](#)

[read more & apply](#)

[Insurance - Customer](#)

[Service Representative](#)

[read more & apply](#)

Search Chicago jobs

Search

[All Chicago jobs](#)

[Post resume](#)

[Post a job](#)

powered by [careerbuilder](#)

**SHOP CHICAGO FASHION**



ZIP Code:   powered by [shopLocal.com](#)

Most viewed

Most e-mailed

In the past hour

1. [State's '7 wonders' include parks, Wrigley but no Lincoln](#)
2. [Moseley Braun discusses mugging, students' help](#)
3. [Tank Johnson pleads in gun case](#)
4. [More cars make the call for help](#)
5. [Apologetic accused madam says client records will aid defense](#)

[More most viewed](#)

 **metromix.com**

Find places and events on [metromix.com](#).

Go

quick clicks:

[Music](#) | [Movies](#) | [Events/Best Bets](#) | [Reader Reviews](#)

Videos from CNN, Tribune, CLTV and WGN: