

20 UNUSUAL USES FOR WINE

by Stephanie Rogers on October 28, 2011 in **FOOD**



Wine is more than just a social platform.

You pop the cork on that 2004 Bordeaux that you've been saving for a special occasion, only to find that it's gone so tart and vinegary, even the most ardent wino wouldn't touch it. Don't pour it out! You could use it to trap flies, dye fabric, clean the counter top and make your skin glow. Try these unusual uses for spoiled or leftover wine, and learn a few enticing reasons to knock back a glass of the good stuff at least once a day.

Fabric dye

If you've ever spilled red wine on fabric, you know how well the color holds on to just about any type of material. You can use virtually any type of red wine to dye fabric as long as you're open to experimentation when it comes to the result, which could range from pale pink to deep mauve or even gray. Heat the wine to simmering in a big soup pot on the stove top, add your fabric, stir with a wooden spoon for 10 minutes and allow to cool. Rinse the fabric well.

Skin softener

All of those antioxidants that make red wine a healthy beverage may also provide benefits when applied directly to the skin. Some women recommend using red wine as a toner, which may help smooth and refine skin thanks to the acidity which is similar to that of vinegar. Actress Teri Hatcher **reportedly** pours a glass of red wine into her bath water, and **in India**, wine has many beauty uses, like softening and brightening the skin in spa facials.

Frozen cubes of flavor

Pour leftover wine into an ice tray so you always have easy-to-use, single servings of extra flavor on hand for soup, stew, sauces and other cooking uses.

Clean fruits and vegetables

Just like **baking soda**, wine can be used as a natural fruit and vegetable cleaner. The alcohol in the wine dissolves impurities on the surface, and **according to a 2005 study** by Mark Daeschel of Oregon State University, components in wine kill several types of foodborne pathogens like salmonella and E. coli.

Kitchen disinfectant

The same microbiologist who discovered wine's fruit-cleaning abilities also determined that the alcohol in wine can **efficiently remove countertop stains** and disinfect kitchen surfaces. Daeschel, who is working on a white wine-based cleaner made from waste wine says, "It needs to be recycled, reused, or otherwise it just gets dumped into our waste drain." If you want to try it at home, he recommends using dry white wines such as sauvignon blanc, because they won't leave a stain or sticky residue. Warning – don't try this tip on granite, as acids will eat away at the surface.



Glass cleaner

Spoiled white wine is on its way to being vinegar, so naturally it works like a charm on dirty glass. Add a few tablespoons to a spray bottle of water, apply to windows and mirrors and wipe with a newspaper.

Fruit fly trap

Few things are more tempting to pesky fruit flies than an aromatic glass of red wine. Use this attraction to your advantage and soon these unwanted guests will disappear from your kitchen. Just pour a half-inch of red wine into a glass and cover it tightly with plastic wrap. Then, poke a few small holes in the wrap, which will let the flies in, but won't allow them to exit.

Remove grease stains

Pour leftover white wine onto grease and oil stains on garage floors and driveways, and the alcohol and acidity will help them dissipate.

Heal bruises

An old folk remedy recommends soaking a piece of bread in wine and then applying it to a bruise to help it heal faster. Does it really work? It's hard to say, but there may be some science to support this theory. Wine is rich in flavonoids, which are antioxidants that have a number of beneficial effects on the body, including soothing inflamed tissue.

Use wine to clean wine

You're at a dinner party, and an enthusiastic hand gesture knocks your glass of red wine over right onto the host's new white carpet. What to do? Grab the nearest glass of white wine – not to help you forget your embarrassment, but to pour onto the red wine stain. Flood the stain and then blot it up immediately with a towel.



Help your heart

The antioxidants and resveratrol found in red wine make this alcoholic beverage **healthy for your heart**. Studies have shown that a moderate intake of red wine can increase levels of 'good' cholesterol, protecting against artery damage. If ever there was a better reason to make sure your wine doesn't go sour in the first place, this is it.

Meat marinade

Not only does red wine make steak extra-flavorful, it **may reduce cancer-causing compounds** naturally found in meats. Frying and grilling meat at high temperatures turns sugars and amino acids of muscle tissue into carcinogenic compounds, but marinating steak in red wine for at least six hours before cooking can reduce two types of carcinogens by up to 90 percent. Use about a cup of red wine, a cup of olive oil and the seasonings of your choice like garlic, parsley and peppercorns.

Turn it into jelly

Your choice of wine, some sugar and a pouch of liquid pectin are all it takes to make a customized flavor of wine jelly. Who wouldn't like a little homemade champagne jelly with strawberries on their morning toast? **Instructables has the details**, which simply requires a few pots and some canning jars.

Relieve dyspepsia

While wine itself can be the culprit of heartburn in some people, it can actually cure it in others. At least, that's according to old European folk wisdom, which advocates drinking a glass of light white wine, which has low alcohol content. Some types of white wines contain added sodium bicarbonate – otherwise known as baking soda, a proven heartburn remedy – to temper acidity, so that might explain it.

Make red wine reduction

If you're left with just a little bit of a wine you don't particularly like, try turning it into an extra flavorful sauce that pairs beautifully with steak (and Portabello mushrooms, for vegetarians.) Red wine reduction sounds fancy, but it's actually pretty easy. **This recipe from Cooking Light** uses broth, wine, shallots and tomato paste.



Boost brainpower

Two new studies have shown that polyphenols in wine (and chocolate!) increase blood flow and oxygen to the brain, boosting cognitive ability. The effect gets even more beneficial as you age, since there is a natural reduction in blood supply around the brain later in life. All the more reason to have a glass of ‘medicine’ and a little dessert every chance you get.

Improve health... in space

Okay, so maybe it’s not all that practical for most of us, but this is definitely an unusual use for wine. Studies at the University of Strasbourg in France found that resveratrol in red wine could help temper the adverse health effects of zero gravity. When they’re just floating around on lengthy missions, astronauts lose muscle and bone density, but resveratrol may inhibit these effects. And what’s cooler than sipping a glass of Chianti while gazing down at the Earth from a space ship?

Slow the aging process

Does resveratrol slow aging or not? There’s some debate as to just how much of a benefit we really get from drinking a glass of red wine every day, as recommended by many experts. “As an anti-aging device, it’s as good as it gets,” says Dr. Richard A. Baxter, stating that drinking red wine in moderation is the most important thing you can do to slow the aging process other than not smoking. “A glass a day and your skin will glow.”

Turn it into vinegar

If all else fails, you can always let nature take its course and turn that leftover wine into vinegar. Just leave an opened, 3/4 full bottle of wine out for a few weeks and it will transform on its own. You can also make vinegar from wine in larger quantities by pouring a quart of wine and a cup of vinegar into a sterilized wide-mouthed glass jug, capping it off but opening it for 30 minutes per day. It’s ready when the thick, jelly-like ‘mother’ sinks to the bottom. Just keep adding more wine as you use it.

Power Prince Charles’ Aston Martin

If you’re loaded like Prince Charles, you can use wine to power your ultra-pricey vintage Aston Martin. The British king-in-waiting converted his 38-year-old car to run on biofuel made from surplus wine as a way to reduce his carbon emissions. Of course, we plebes can apply this to our own lives (and less fancy cars) by purchasing pre-made wine bio-ethanol or even possibly making it ourselves.