



It is a typical Friday evening, and a group of friends are out celebrating the weekend with a drink. A far cry from unusual behavior, the consumption of alcohol is very common, going back to humanity's nascent days [over ten million years](#) ago. In fact, in the modern day United States, it is estimated that over 86% of people have drank alcohol on [at least one occasion](#) in their lives. Going back to those friends, who clearly fall into that 86%, they could be drinking beer, wine or spirits.

Depending on the region where these coworkers reside, there is greater likelihood toward a [preference for one or another](#). West Virginia, for instance, is obviously a beer loving state, with a consumption ratio of 5:1 against wine and 2:1 against spirits. Meanwhile, New Hampshire enjoys its spirits at a nearly 2:1 level over beer. Lastly, Massachusetts is clearly full of wine aficionados, with a similar 2:1 ratio.

Moving from the regional level to the international stage, the [United States is beer-dominant](#), with 52.7 of its consumption coming from the barley-based beverage. Mexico and Canada, along with most of North America, follow suit. Asia, on the other hand, is very spirit-centric, with Sri Lanka leading the charge at 94.3%. On this level, wine is primarily based in Chile and Argentina, as well as the southern half of Europe.



Image: Artesa Vineyards & Winery - Napa Valley, California (Source: [Jordan Steinberg](#))

While mostly true, this does not tell the whole vintage story. Over [two-thirds of the world's wine](#) comes from seven country sources, in descending order — France, Italy, Spain, United States, Argentina, Australia and South Africa. When it comes to thinking about wine, it is easy to only think of these places. Merlots come from France, Cabernets from the United States, Malbec's from Argentina, and Shiraz from Australia and so on.

In the United States even, it is just as easy to only consider the vineyards based out of California, where [nearly 90% of the production](#) takes place. Moreover, out of the [ten best-selling](#) wines in the world, five come from California, while four come from Australia and one comes from Chile.

What about the rest of the world? The same conditions that enable California to produce such a volume exists in many places elsewhere, though perhaps not to the same broad extent, in places one would never expect. One such [extreme example](#) is Red Mountain Estate Vineyards & Winery in [Nyaung Shwe, Myanmar](#), where they grow their stocks along the banks of Inle Lake. Despite the instability that has [wracked the country in recent decades](#), their 400,000 plants have survived and thrived to that point of over 150,000 bottles in annual production.



Image: Wine tasting at Red Mountain Winery - Nyaung Shwe, Myanmar (Source: [Jordan Steinberg](#))

More notably, in 2016, Moët-Hennessy partnered with a major Chinese spirit producer to [form an experimental vintage](#). At nearly 2,590 meters (8,500 feet), the Aoyun vineyard is now one of the highest-elevation wineries in the world. Located in the foothills of the Himalayas in the province of Yunnan, any potential visitor must traverse a 4,500 meter (2.8 mile) narrow mountain pass to reach the AoYun facility, which is split across four separate villages. Adding to the enterprise's unique nature, rather than engaging in typical harvest practices, the winery uses yaks instead of tractors. In the fermentation process, ceramic jars are used instead of the traditional wine barrel.

Just as wine-making practices are clearly not set-in-stone, neither are the ingredients. While grapes are completely thought of as synonymous with wine, there can also be wines [based from alternative sources](#). Honey wine from Ethiopia, coconut wine from the Philippines, plum wine from Japan, and pomegranate wine from Armenia are just a few examples of this. The base requirement is that these sources are fermented in the same way one would ferment grapes in a traditional process.

Wine from other countries, made in unusual locations and from unique ingredients — shows that wine does not have to always fit the traditional stereotypes. In order to try a variety without having to travel to the aforementioned countries, wine clubs are a great option. Depending on the quality of the club, by simply sending a bottle once or twice a month for a given period of time, the chance of exposure to these exotic vintages increases dramatically. Should this be of interest, ConsumersAdvocate.org's list of [top ten wine clubs](#) would be an excellent place to get started.