

ENERGISE



DRINK & BE GUILT-FREE

With the party season just around the corner, it's time to make that conscious decision to not only eat smart but drink smart too. Here's the skinny on the good, the bad and somewhere-in-between party beverages.

Text Jaclyn Reuters

WINE VERSUS BEER

It's hard to find a festive celebration without wine or beer. Relatively affordable, these two are the more popular choices among party goers and organisers.

If you are faced with this dilemma, pick wine as it is a better choice than beer as it contains far more nutritional benefits. Wine is rich in phenols which can be further categorised as non-flavonoids and flavonoids. Beer does not contain phenols but it does have small amounts of B vitamins; namely riboflavin, pyridoxine and folate.

Wine, especially red wine contains more resveratrol, a non-flavonoid, than white wine. Resveratrol is a potent antioxidant and an anti-inflammatory agent. It inhibits platelet aggregation, which means it reduces the risk of blood clots. It also promotes vascular smooth muscle proliferation which relaxes blood vessel walls and allows blood to flow smoothly, reducing the risk of high blood pressure.

Tannins are the flavonoids found in the skins of grapes, seeds and stems. They are a natural preservative in wine and are found to be beneficial for vascular health. White wines have lower tannin levels than red wine.

While drinking wine in moderation appears to reduce cardiovascular risk, it is also advised that social drinkers should not start to drink wine regularly for its health benefits as it is easy for the drinking to get out of control. Excessive consumption of any alcohol will be harmful to the liver and increases the risk of cancers and diabetes.

Bear in mind that the nutritional content of wine can also be sought from whole foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables which are obviously alcohol-free and contains much lower calories.

Sparkling wines do contain lesser sugar than wines and this is because the grapes used contain less sugar than grapes used to make wine. Just be mindful of the quantity consumed as Sparkling wines contain an average of 18 percent sugar as compared to wines which contain about 23 percent. The amount of sugar in two glasses of sparkling wine is much higher than in one glass of wine.

ALCOHOL CONTENT OF WINE

Alcoholic drink labels usually state the percentage of alcohol content and do not carry as much information as food products. The alcoholic content of wines range from 12 to 16 percent; beers range from 3 to 6 percent; and for hard liquor, 35 percent and above.

Alcoholic drink labels do not list the ingredients but most wines will state if they contain sulphites as there are individuals who might be allergic to them and have serious reactions. Other information include, the country of origin, wine type, vintage year and health warnings. If you wish to drink, choose something that you will enjoy, but you should always keep to the recommended limit of three glasses for men and two glasses for women.

LESS SINFUL PARTY TIPPLES?

Other common party 'poisons' are cordials and punch. Cordial is concentrated syrup that is usually fruit flavoured. If used in a drink mixer, it combines with alcohol to produce a cocktail. Punch is also another term to describe a juice drink mixed with alcohol. Cordials and punch provide a significant amount of calories. Novelty drinks are constantly being invented to attract crowds to new drinking joints so the ingredients used vary. A standard size glass of 150-200ml can pack 200-400kcal depending on how much cordial, syrup, liqueur, hard liquor is used. It is even more lethal, calorie-wise, than drinking a glass of wine or even whiskey on the rocks. Given its sweet nature, you will be more inclined to go for another glass. If you are concerned with calories, it is best to stay away from punches and cordial.

A COMPARATIVE REPORT ON CELEBRATORY DRINKS AND THEIR CALORIE CONTENT

Alcoholic drink	Serving size	Calories (kcal)
Beer	330ml (1 can)	144
White wine	100ml (1 glass)	66
Red wine	100ml (1 glass)	68
Moscato	100ml (1 glass)	90
Tequila, Gin, Rum, Vodka	30ml (1 shot)	66-70
Port	30ml (1 shot)	175
Apple cider	330ml (1 bottle)	171
Gin tonic	200ml (1 glass)	68
Brandy	30ml (1 shot)	98
Champagne	120 (1 flute)	71
Whiskey	30ml (1 shot)	116
Bloody Mary	150ml (1 glass)	205
Margarita	180ml (1 glass)	205
Lychee Martini	180ml (1 glass)	190
Daquiri	150ml (1 glass)	281
Pina Colada	130ml (1 glass)	245
Tom Collins	220ml (1 glass)	120

ALCOHOLIC AND SODA DRINKS CONTAIN LITTLE OR NO VITAMINS OR ESSENTIAL MINERALS. WORSE YET, SODAS CONTAIN TOO MUCH PHOSPHATE THAT WILL LEACH CALCIUM FROM YOUR BONES.



HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

A standard refers to 10g of alcohol. This is equivalent to 100ml of wine, 2/3 can of beer and 30ml (one shot) of hard liquor. For females, the recommendation is no more than two standard drinks a day and males, no more than three standard drinks a day. For both females and males, it is advised to have two alcohol-free days in a week. This is to allow your liver to rest. Breaking alcohol down is stressful to the liver, therefore it is essential to give it a break.

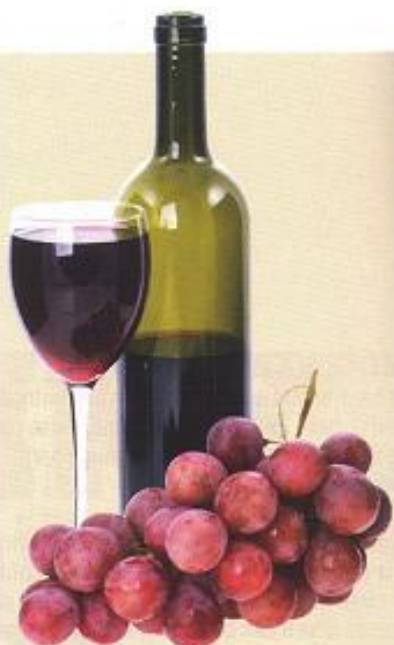
Drinking sodas is no lesser evil either. In a meta-analysis of about 80 studies, there is a positive correlation between intake of soft drinks (including sodas) and weight gain. It was also associated with lower intakes of calcium, fibre and nutrients giving an increased risk of weight-related diseases such as diabetes.

Sodas refer to non-alcoholic drinks that contain added sugar, water and flavouring such as colas or juices. Its caloric content comes from sugar. One gram of sugar provides 4kcal and 1 gram of alcohol provides 7kcal. A can of coke contains 139kcal and one can of beer has 144kcal; small difference. Both drinks contain little or no vitamins or essential minerals. Worse yet, sodas contain too much phosphate that will leach calcium from your bones. Caffeine found in sodas

also depletes calcium and might keep you awake if you drink too much, depriving you of sleep. As a runner, bone health is very important as you are giving it pressure every time you run. You need strong bones to be able to run faster and longer distances. If you mix alcohol with sodas, example bourbon coke, it becomes double trouble as it contains both alcohol and added sugars.

Alcohol is a diuretic that makes you lose minerals such as zinc and potassium that is much needed if you intend to continue training. Drinking too much alcohol leads to an increased risk of cancers of the oesophagus, mouth, throat, liver and breast, even if you run regularly. It can also lead to liver cirrhosis, alcoholic hepatitis and cardiomyopathy (damaged heart muscle). Even moderate intake of alcohol carries some risk. It affects sleep, making you sleep and wake at irregular hours. This can lead to fatigue and poor judgement. Everything boils down to quantity, always know your limit. Too much alcohol makes you gain weight despite your regular training; and that will slow you down or make you sluggish because your liver is overworked.

Given the negatives of excessive drinking, the heart related health benefits of alcohol are nothing to celebrate about if consumption is left unchecked. **R**



TRIVIA

- The average number of grapes needed to make a bottle of wine is 600.
- The word 'toast' is a wish of good health, started in Ancient Rome where a piece of toasted bread was dropped into wine.
- Red wine gets lighter as it ages and white wine gets darker as it ages.
- When re-arranged, the letters in the word 'spirits' spell 'sip it sir'.

QUICK FACTS

- Binge drinking on a single occasion weakens your immunity for 24 hours and you will be more prone to infections like the flu.
- A raised insulin level from excessive sugary drinks intake also weakens your immune system.
- Heavy drinkers are more prone to pneumonia and tuberculosis.