

Grains Trump Grapes? Beer More Healthy Than Wine

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Contrary to popular opinion, beer is as healthy—if not more healthy—than wine, according to a university professor with an academic title any Joe Six-pack would relish.

Charles Bamforth, chairman of the food science department at the University of California at Davis and an Anheuser-Busch endowed professor, told food scientists assembled here Tuesday that beer contains valuable B vitamins, such as B12, folic acid and niacin, as well as antioxidants, such as polyphenols and ferulic acid.

Bamforth, author of the book *Beer: Health and Nutrition* says beer also has soluble fiber, which is good for digestion, and the active ingredient in alcohol—whether from beer or wine—helps counter blockage of the arteries.

“People say red wine is key to that,” Bamforth said. “But beer, if you looked at it holistically, is healthier than wine. But it is not perceived that way.”

“It’s entirely about perception.” And it’s those perceptions that Bamforth has recently been studying.

After polling 325 men and woman visiting breweries on both U.S. coasts and the Midwest, Bamforth found that the nutritional understanding of people about beer was largely in error.

When asked which is the healthiest alcoholic beverage, drinkers put red wine followed by white wine at the top of the list. Then came light beer, light-colored beer and then dark-beer. Actually, there's little difference health-wise between any of them, according to Bamforth.

Does beer have sugar? Fat? Preservatives? On all counts, those polled said it did. In every instance, they were wrong. Only 39 percent believed beer contained vitamins and minerals. Few believed it contained antioxidants.

When asked to rank which sources of information they consider credible, Bamforth's beer drinkers placed doctors at the top of the list. Bamforth claims many physicians are among those that are misinformed about beer.

"I have a friend who is a doctor who says, 'Don't drink beer because it has fat,' said Bamforth. "There's no fat in it at all."

Bamforth says the beer industry has been slow to counter consumers' false perceptions in part because beer companies don't want to be perceived as pushing alcohol on teenagers.

Bamforth presented his research at that Institute of Food Technologists Annual Meeting + FOOD EXPO®, the world's largest annual food science forum and exposition.

Source: Institute of Food Technologists

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