

For a healthy heart consider a red

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Hippocrates used red wine to disinfect wounds. The Romans would add small amounts to their water supply to ensure purity. And in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Cornelius toasts to his nephew’s “better health” – even if the wine did turn out to be poisoned.

Even before microbes could be magnified or arteries could be mended, people turned to wine, not only to soothe, but also to heal. But it wasn’t until much ado was made over the French, their eating habits and their lifespan that modern science started taking wine as seriously as, well, everyone else.

The “French Paradox,” as it’s been dubbed, ponders the question: How

can a people who invented such delicacies as quiche, foie gras and éclairs have such relatively low cases of heart disease and cholesterol?

The answer, many put forth, was in the wine.

“The research is concrete that drinking wine in moderation provides your body with significant heart health benefit,” said FIU alumna and nutritionist Janet Brill MS ’93, the author of [Prevent a Second Heart Attack](#). “I recommend to everyone that can drink safely to drink one glass a day.”

Brill, who dedicates an entire chapter of her book to the benefits of [red wine](#), notes that someone who drinks in moderation decreases their chance of a heart attack by 50 percent. Even someone who discovers wine later in life can reap the benefits – provided it’s done in moderation.

Specifically, red wine benefits the heart in three major ways.

First, Brill said research has found that the ingredients found in red grapes, most notably resveratrol, boost the production of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol – the good kind of cholesterol that helps remove the plaque that builds around the artery wall. Heart attacks happen when that plaque bursts or builds to a point that clogs the artery and prevents blood flow.

Second, those same elements in grapes not only raise HDL cholesterol, but also make the particles bigger.

“You want big, fat fluffy versions of HDL,” Brill said. “That’s a beautiful thing when it comes to preventing heart disease.”

Finally, red wine increases antioxidant levels, which fight the very

creation of plaque. And to top it off, Brill said, the ethanol found in wine – and in all alcoholic beverages – seems to increase the potency of those antioxidants already found in grapes (and any other red fruit).

“At the base level, everything looks great for wine,” said sommelier and wine educator Aaron Berdofe.

Berdofe reminds us that the research is fairly new and many times, “we just want justification for drinking wine.” Moderation is key. That means two 8-ounce glasses a day for men and one for women.

And it may not be just the wine alone that causes the French to live longer and healthier lives, despite their cuisine. Literally, Berdofe said, it may be their joie de vivre.

“For the French, it may also include being active, eating right and having a strong social community,” he said.

Tania Rivera, an assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics at FIU, agrees that there is still much to learn about wine’s role in keeping the heart healthy. She emphasizes that alcohol is not part of a healthy diet.

“Although it doesn’t hurt to have a glass a day, I wouldn’t recommend to someone who doesn’t drink to start the habit just to keep the heart healthy,” she said.

So, which would be the [heart](#) healthiest wines? Pinot noir, says Brill. Grapes grown for this red wine usually come from cold and wet environments so that the healthiest parts of the fruit are kept at their freshest. Other dark, rich reds like cabernet and petite syrah also top the list for health benefits.

Provided by Florida International University

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