

## The Skinny On Wine

By Courtney Cochran, Wine Consultant and Sommelier

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Did you know that drinking wine can make you thin? Well, it's not quite that easy, but according to a rash of new "non-diets" on the market, when consumed in moderation wine can help reduce food cravings, lower your risk of heart disease and diabetes, and keep stress at bay.

Since the internationally bestselling book "French Women Don't Get Fat" hit stores in late 2004, a new philosophy has sprung up amongst its followers: eating and drinking well are the REAL secrets to a slimmer waistline. The so-called French Paradox is what's fueling this new philosophy, which has its roots in the French people's copious consumption of fattening foods like cheese, chocolate and butter and unapologetically regular consumption of red wine.

In spite of this, French people are slimmer than their American counterparts and have a lower incidence of heart disease. *Pourquoi*, you might ask? The answer lies largely in the other things French folks do besides eating and drinking: they tend to walk and integrate regular exercise into their lives more than we do, they control their portions, and they transform eating and drinking into a ritual—savoring food and drink for longer than we do and never eating in front of the tube.

But less obvious than portion control and regular exercise is the role wine plays in weight maintenance. Like food, wine contains calories, carbohydrates and chemical components. Some of these chemical components are believed to function as anti-oxidants, preventing molecules known as free-radicals from doing cellular damage to our bodies. Other evidence suggests that red wine dilates small blood vessels, helping to prevent angina and clotting.

The end result is reduced risk of heart disease and greater protection against a host of other ailments, including cancer. This protection, along with the benefits of exercise, is why French people not only don't get fat but tend to lead longer, more healthy lives in spite of their proclivity for fatty foods.

Another diet taking a cue from the French Paradox is "Marie Claire" magazine's Wine, Chocolate and Cheese Diet, which appeared in the September and October issues. The diet recommends consuming a glass of red wine or a piece of chocolate with dinner, but not both. What this really boils down to: it's okay to indulge in seemingly "bad" things like wine and chocolate so long as you don't take in too many calories!

This may all seem like common sense, and in fact that's exactly what the author of "French Women Don't Get Fat," Frenchwoman Mireille Guiliano, contends. She calls her book "the ultimate non-diet book", and explains on her website



([www.mireilleguiliano.com](http://www.mireilleguiliano.com)) that fans of her book tell her it contains common sense tips they'd known all along "but had forgotten about." So, you may be asking yourself, if it's so easy NOT to get fat, why isn't everyone thin? I don't have the answer to this new paradox, but I can recommend pondering it over a glass of red wine. After all, it's good for you.

*Note: As appeared in the Visalia Times-Delta November 9, 2005.*