

# The Herald Bulletin

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## Unscrewing your wine is just fine

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There's boxed lunches, Jack-In-The-Box burgers, and boxed wine.

What do those three things have in common? Generally, they are best all avoided.

But that has changed with recent innovations in boxed wine. Yes, it's okay to drink your Chardonnay, Cabernet, or red wine blend from a tap on the kitchen counter.

Now, before the purists drop their newspaper and wonder what wine that guy must be drinking, consider the uproar 20 years ago when screw caps started turning up on wine. Today the screw cap has become common place in the value wine market. As a matter of fact, I purchased a \$40 California Pinot Noir a few weeks ago with a screw cap! That would have been unthinkable just a decade ago. And it was a great \$40 wine.

Franzia, long the standard bearer for box wine, is one of the biggest selling names in wine. The good news is companies now pack wine in vacuum sealed containers that preserve the wine for up to six weeks.

I recently tasted two different wines packaged in the Octavin Home Wine Bar system. Ten different wines are being offered in the three-liter containers — or about 20 five-ounce glasses of wine. The price for the boxed juice runs \$22-\$24.

The Octavin system is a patent-pending design which prevents oxidation. Another huge upside to the wine box according to the Octavin folks is its green efficiency. By choosing boxed wine over heavy glass bottles, you reduce packaging waste by at least 85 percent and carbon emissions by 55 percent.

There are other innovations going on in the wine world. Wine is turning up in cans and experiments are going on with plastic bottles and how that might impact the wine. A revolution takes time but consider the possibilities. Anyone who has ever picked up a great bottle of Pinot Noir probably thought they were getting a bicep workout.

Another big advantage to box packaging systems is the convenience. For those who just want a simple glass of wine, the boxed wines provide just that without wondering what to do with the rest of the bottle or how to preserve it.

I was sent two different boxed wines by the marketing company for the Octavin Company. I have been sampling a Monthaven 2008 Central Coast Chardonnay since March 31. I last tasted the wine April 21. While Chardonnay isn't my favorite varietal, and this one is a tad thin, the wine tasted no different over that four-week time frame.

I also have a box of Big House Red which I just opened recently. It's a blend of Syrah, Petit Verdot, Syrah, Grenache and about a half dozen more grapes. Big House Red is widely available and a nice every day wine. It usually lists around \$11, but the Octavin box sells for \$22.

I've tasted other box wines in retail shops in the last year and, frankly, been blown away at the quality of the wine. Now, make no mistake this isn't wine you're going to be reading about in Wine Spectator or from the nation's top critics. But the wines I've tasted make a nice single glass of wine from a container which will keep it fresh for up to six weeks.

The idea is catching on across the nation. Last year box wine sales went up 24 percent, according to the Nielsen research folks.

Boxed wine is no longer a punch line for wine enthusiasts. Now, if we could just do something to reduce the calories in those great Jack-In-The-Box burgers!

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