

Wine May Pose Risks for Milk Allergies

Allergic Girl ~ So last week a Worry Free Dinners participant, who has a dairy allergy, asked about casein in wine. I knew that egg was often used in the wine making process, but didn't know where exactly and now I find out that dairy is in wine too? The next morning, I got on the case and emailed a colleague, noted wine expert Tyler Coleman, otherwise known as Dr. Vino. Tyler had this to say about eggs, casein [milk protein] and wine: "Yes, egg whites are a common fining agent and yes, casein is sometimes used. But there are no labeling standards to indicate which ones (but the Feds are talking about new labeling for wine). Until then, check for wines that are bottled & unfiltered and unfiltered;--they often taste better anyway."

Unfiltered? What's that?

I turned to another colleague and expert, wine consultant Remy Ash to help me sort out these terms. Remy pulled some facts about the fining and filtration process from the Oxford Companion to Wine, 3rd Edition by Jancis Robinson.

"The biggest reason for fining and filtering wines is to remove molecules of colloidal size, such things as polymerized tannins, pigmented tannins, other phenolics and heat unstable proteins. Filtration acts only on particles compared to fining which works on particles and soluble substances. The whole idea of fining and filtering is achieving a state of clarity for the wine in a quick more economical fashion. Most wines are left for the proper amount of time (usually months) in the proper conditions would achieve the same effect of fining."

"The different types of fining agents are classified in two general classes. Inorganic chemicals like bentonite, silica, activated carbon (coal) and sometimes potassium ferrocyanide. Or organic Compounds like casein from milk, albumin from egg whites, isinglass [fish bladder] and gelatin."

(FYI: Here's an interesting article breaking down the fining process from a vegetarian standpoint.)

Kosher wine, according to Marty Siegmeister, NY/NJ/Metro brand manager for Allied Importers [second largest wine importer in the US], typically does not use casein in the process of fining or filtering their wine. Marty says: "The material used is one of the important things determining if the wines are kosher or not. No animal products are used or dairy products like casein. However, sometimes egg is used since it is parve Usually they use some type of clay, similar to what is used in some swimming pool filters."

The question in all of this for an allergic diner is: do any of the organic fining agents have an impact of the end products allergenicity? Here's an interesting article about wine allergies debunking the whole sulfite issue and here is an article pointing to sulfites as the culprit and a third article from Beekman Wines in New Jersey that breaks down the possible causes of wine allergies. A bit more digging discovered this interesting site and article from the Allergen Bureau about the potential allergenicity from egg, casein and fish parts.

-The Scientific Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies of the European Food Safety Agency has recently released opinions on the likelihood of individuals suffering allergic reactions in relation to a number of processed foods.

--The Panel considered it "unlikely" that cereals, nuts or whey used in distilled spirits would lead to severe allergic responses. A similar conclusion was reached for vegetable oils-derived phytosterols and phytosterol esters from soybean and for natural tocopherols from soybean.

-It was considered "not very likely" that wheat based maltodextrins or wheat or barley starch based glucose syrups would cause severe allergic responses. None of these products were determined to be of concern to celiacs, provided the concentration of gluten considered by Codex Alimentarius for foods rendered gluten-free is not exceeded. It was also considered "not very likely" that isinglass would trigger an allergic response when used as a clarifying agent in beer.

Now to our WFD diner's question about dairy in the wine making process. "The Allergen Bureau panel considered that milk and milk products used in winemaking may trigger allergic responses."

Aha!

As with all things, consult with your GP or allergist about your allergies and food sensitivities but I hope this article will help you to start understand your possible allergic or non-allergic relationship to wine.

As for some Kosher brands to try, according to Marty:
Tabor Wines uses eggs to fine but not dairy.

Yarden has an organic line.

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