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Oscars ▾ Arts & Entertainment ▾ Cars ▾ Books & Ideas ▾ Fashion ▾ Food & Drink ▾ Sports ▾ Travel ▾ WSJ. Magazine ▾ Ideas Market

Paper or Plastic? Wine by the Box, Keg and Can

By Lettie Teague



The ancient Romans are said to have pioneered a packaging breakthrough by putting wines in glass bottles. As subsequent generations of wine producers realized, wine tasted better, looked better and lasted longer this way. Glass also allowed winemakers of different countries and regions to tailor individual looks—tall, thin green bottles for wines of the Mosel, square-necked bottles for Bordeaux and rounder, brownish bottles for Burgundy.

Today's wine-packaging breakthroughs include metal barrels, plastic bottles, cardboard boxes, aluminum

Oenofile: Alternate packaging

Although I also loved some of the wines on tap that I tasted, they're only served at restaurants—hence, these five in boxes and Tetra Paks.



2009 California Rabbit Pinot Noir, \$6 (500 ml, \$5)

A pleasingly light Pinot from Boisset Family Estates—whose holdings are in both Burgundy and California—makes a Tetra Pak wine that spans both continents as well. It's a California wine that's lively, drinkable and, well, quite cheap.

both Gott Wines (packaged in traditional glass bottles) and Bandit wines (packaged in Tetra), says vintage dating on these packages is just "a marketing ploy." Though one of his Bandit wines, a Merlot, carries a vintage date, most of them have "bottling" dates embossed on the box tops. Mr. Gott says it's more important to know when the wine was packaged than its vintage. "Tetra wines oxidize after about 24 months," said Mr. Gott.