

How fattening is Wine ?

By Dave March CWM

Do you wonder why, despite your gym membership, you can't maintain the shape you were in your twenties? Are you watching what you eat yet still losing sight of everything below waist level?

Could it be the fault of wine? Since I 'discovered' wine in my late thirties I have unwittingly developed a resistance (or blindness) to its effects. Whereas one glass on occasion became one glass several times a week, then – and I blame South African winemakers for this – it became a glass every night. The choice confronting me, the quality and the price, linked with the delight of experiencing where the product came from beguiled me into a habitual large glass per evening. To start with.

But I love sweet wine too; sherry and port style here, not to mention Muscadel and soon a glass whilst cooking dinner became obligatory such that I don't feel I could cook at all without my best friends Boplaas, DeKrans, KWV and others beside me. Trouble is, those luscious dessert wines hold some 90-160 grams of sugar in every litre, so my glass probably contains around 30 grams of sugar – not particularly helpful to the cause.

Of course, nothing goes with food like a delicious Chenin or Cabernet, or Shiraz, or Sauvignon. So a glass went with me to the table. Having cleared up, and put away, what can beat stretching out to 'Dance Moms' with a sumptuous red?

By mid evening the empty glass stared at me, so off for a refill. Then a small one later on.

So now I have consumed some 150ml of sweet wine, and three glasses at 150ml of red or white.

I Googled the damage. There is no fat in wine, but there are calories – which are essential and not necessarily permanent, provided they are burnt off. So how many calories would I need to burn? The small sweet wine? 130 calories. The 150ml of white? 120 calories. The 150ml of red? 160 calories. That means that without noticing it I have drunk some 600 calories, probably more. Add to that a snack (well, you have to absorb the alcohol, don't you) whilst relaxing and you can easily go beyond 1000 calories. If men need around 2500 calories per day (woman around 2000) then that is nearly half the required daily intake! I closed Google when I read that that is the same as several chocolate covered ring doughnuts, or four Cornetto's. To rid myself of the evening's libation would entail (for me) around a 70 minute run and those days are long passed. I didn't bother to check the site that said one way to curb this was 'moderation' and as for the article that gave '5 ways to drink wine and keep your waistline', well, as soon as I saw two of the suggestions as 'share' and 'make it a spritzer' I closed Google.

There are plans in Europe to terrify us even more. They are intending to display the number of calories contained within on the label of the bottle which means our exporters will have to comply –

and maybe extend to all their bottles for ease of production. Waitrose supermarket in the UK is already showing calorie content on its own brand wines. So now we will check price, varietal, producer then calories before buying. Perhaps we will see a weightwatcher's wine guide to rival Platter's soon, or a wine competition where wine with more 'body' get seriously embarrassed. Perhaps we should start putting all our wine in Alsace flute shaped bottles, they look much slimmer and might fool the Europeans.

That half-filled bowl shaped glass you are drinking may have some 200 calories lurking in it. Plus, maybe, a small amount of sugar – miniscule, but it's there. And if you think switching to Champagne might help, think again. Unless you select 'Brut Natural' as a style you could be sipping 2 or 3 grams of sugar in every glass and calories too, around 95 per glass is quoted. The Demi-Sec style will sit around 5 grams of sugar in your glass. There is no doubt, then, that wine can contribute to weight gain, but I console myself with the knowledge that an average chocolate bar will have as many calories as my evening's libation and I know which I prefer. Well, both actually, but it did get me looking to avoid fattening unnecessary treats at other times. Life is all about balance. And my wine is not going anywhere.