

Wine: California State University, Long Beach

The Mediterranean -- the sea between the two lands -- links three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Here Eastern and Western civilizations developed, mingled, and fused -- sometimes in peace, more often through war and social conflict. In no other global area are medical, nutritional, and dietary accounts of wine, its production and use, more rich and varied. It is here, too, that European medicine developed from mythology into practice.

The mythological origins of Greek medical-nutritional practices stem from Aesklepios, his physician-sons, Ma-cha-on and Po-dal-i-rus, and his daughter Hygeia. According to Greek mythology, Aesklepios, son of Apollo, sailed on Jason's ship, Argo, during the heroic quest for the golden fleece; According to Homer, Machaon and Po-dal-i-rus fought at Troy. The first Greek physician to emerge from the mythological cloak of Aesklepios, however, was Hippocrates (BCE 460-377).

Hippocrates, considered the father of European medicine, was the first known Mediterranean physician to integrate the physiological constructs of elements, humors, and temperature-moisture attributes into a comprehensive healing system. The corpus of medical writings attributed to Hippocrates is vast, and scholars debate and sort "genuine" Hippocratic texts from fraudulent "later" works. General consensus holds that some medical books can be attributed to Hippocrates, himself, while others were written by later Greek physicians also named Hippocrates, while still others were written by "unnamed" eastern Mediterranean physicians. There has remained the suggestion, too that some works claimed to be written by Hippocrates were in fact authored or strongly influenced by the lesser known Greek physician, Ctesias, who had traveled to Persia and India, whereas there is no evidence that Hippocrates traveled beyond the limits of Asia Minor.

Selections from the Hippocratic texts that consider wine may be grouped into four general categories: 1) wine in health maintenance, 2) rationale for selection of therapeutic wines, 3) wine in disease treatment, and 4) contra-indications for wine use.

Regarding wine in health maintenance, Hippocrates wrote that wine consumption should be seasonal, that wine had specific contributions to make to diet, and that regular wine drinking in moderation protected against specific diseases and medical conditions:

When spring comes . . . at that time [the patient] will be taking the greatest quantity of the most diluted wine, taking care that the change is neither violent nor sudden but that it is made gradually . . . In Autumn the quantity of [wine] taken should be decreased and taken less diluted so that he will have a good winter . . . (Regimen for Health. 1).

Also . . .

Infants should be bathed for long periods in warm water and given their wine diluted and not at all cold. The wine should be of a kind which is least likely to cause distention of the stomach and wind. This should be done to prevent the occurrence of convulsions and to make the children grow and get good complexions (Regimen for Health. 6).

Regarding selection of therapeutic wines, Hippocrates identified specific benefits of wine to patients, and described the choices physicians had when prescribing wines for specific disorders:

If the disease is drier than one would like, the patient should be given a drink of either hydromel [honey-water mixture] or wine -- whichever is appropriate (Regimen in Acute Disease. 12).

Also . . .

Sweet wine is less likely to produce headache than heavy wine, it makes less effect upon the mind and, as regards the internal organs, it is more easily passed than the other, but causes enlargement of the spleen and liver. Sweet wine produces more sputum than the other kind (Regimen in Acute Disease. 50).

Also . . .

The main points in favor of . . . white strong wine . . . it passes more easily to the bladder than the other kind and is diuretic and purgative, it is always very beneficial in acute diseases (Regimen in Acute Disease. 51).

Hippocrates identified the therapeutic role of wine in numerous passages. He described various foods considered to be complementary with wine, and commented on aggressive therapies used to treat Mediterranean diseases and complaints commonly encountered:

[Abdominal distention] . . . those who vomit their food the day after it has been taken and suffer from distention of the hypochondrium [upper lateral abdominal region] showing that the food remains undigested, should . . . drink more wine and take it less diluted and also, at this time, reduce the amount of food (Regimen for Health. 7).

[Perhaps Anorexia; specifically identified as chronic fatigue and exhaustion] . . . those who eat only once a day become exhausted and weak, and pass warm urine on account of their abnormal emptiness . . . With their food, let them drink wine in a reasonable amount and quite dilute, and after dinner walk a little until urine runs down and is passed (Regimen in Acute Disease Appendix. 44).

[Constipation] . . . those who benefit from vomiting and those who have difficulty with passing stools should eat several times a day and take all varieties of food and their meat cooked in every different way and drink two or three kinds of wine (Regimen for Health. 5).

[Exercise or stress-related diarrhea] . . . those who find that exercise causes diarrhea and who pass undigested stools resembling food . . . the diet in such cases should consist of bread baked as well as possible crumbled in wine, together with the smallest quantity of practically undiluted wine . . . [such individuals] should not walk after meals (Regimen for Health. 7).

[Hemorrhoids] . . . [Those with hemorrhoids] must avoid running, drunkenness, and all sharp [foods] except marjoram. Have the patient vomit every seven days, or three times a month, for

thus will his body be in the best condition. Have him drink dry light-colored wine, diluted with water, and little of it (Regimen in Acute Disease Appendix. 62).

[Hepatitis] . . . [When] the urine passed is like the juice of roasted beef . . . This disease arises from dark bile, when it collects in the vessels extending to the kidney . . . give the patient to drink . . . boiled meal as a gruel . . . let him drink white Mendean [from the town of Mendes in the northern Egyptian Nile delta region] wine sweetened with honey, or some other very pleasant one, well mixed with water (Internal Affections. 16).

[Obesity] . . . fat people who want to reduce should take their exercise on an empty stomach and sit down to their food out of breath . . . They should before eating drink some diluted wine, not too cold, and their meat should be dished up with sesame seeds or seasoning and such-like things . . . Those who are fat . . . should vomit on an empty stomach after a run or a brisk walk about the middle of the day (Regimen for Health. 4-5).

[Obesity: another treatment] . . . It benefits this patient if you dry out his cavity by giving him fresh warm dark whole-wheat bread, and as main dish the meat of ass, mature dog, swine and sheep, these very fat and boiled, or meat of fowl, roasted and warm; also let him eat polyp boiled in dry dark wine; let him drink dark wine that is very thick and sour (Internal Affections. 22).

*[Tetanus] . . . [When] his jaws are fixed, and he is unable to open his mouth . . . Grind wormwood [*Artemisia absinthium*], bay leaves, or henbane seed with frankincense; soak this in white wine, and pour it into a new pot; add an amount of oil equal to the wine, warm, and anoint the patient's body copiously with the warm fluid, and also his head . . . also give him very sweet white wine to drink in large quantities (Internal Affections. 52).*

[Typhus] . . . this disease comes on in summer, when the Dog Star [Sirius] rises, because of bile being set in motion through the body . . . On the first days do not allow [the patient] to bathe, but anoint him at bedtime with warm wine and oil . . . Keep him away from food, but give thin

chilled gruels; let him drink dry dark wine, if it benefits him; if this wine does not benefit him, let him drink very dilute dry white [wine] (Internal Affections. 39).

Hippocrates also identified specific medical conditions when wine should not be drunk or employed therapeutically:

If there is any suspicion of a violent headache or derangement of the mind in these diseases, wine must be completely avoided (Regimen in Acute Disease. 63).

Celsus of Verona, BCE 27 - 37 CE, while not a physician, wrote on the role of diet in medical therapeutics. He commented on both positive and negative roles played by wine. Celsus classified foods into specific dietary categories, based upon their perceived strength-giving properties. Beverages belonged to the strongest food category and included milk and fermented drinks made from grain, honey (mead), and grapes. Celsus highly recommended wine, whether sweet, still fermenting, or aged (On Medicine. 2:18:11).

Regarding nutritious, strengthening, and warming properties of wine Celsus wrote:

[Wine] coming from a good soil is more nutritious than from a poor one, that from a temperate climate more nutritious than from an extreme one, whether too wet or too dry, whether excessively cold or hot (On Medicine. 2:18:11-12).

[Regarding foods] best suited to the stomach . . . dry wine is allowable even although it may have become harsh, also that [wine] doctored with resin (On Medicine. 2:24:3).

Heating foods are . . . wine, and the stronger this is, the more heating it is (On Medicine. 2:27:1).

Celsus identified diuretic, laxative, and constipative attributes of wine in several passages:

The bowels are moved by: fresh grapes . . . [as well as] sweet or salted wine (On Medicine. 2:29:1-2).

The bowels are confined by: wine resinated or harsh, and that undiluted, vinegar, mead which has been heated, also must boiled down, raisin wine (On Medicine. 2:30:3).

Galen of Pergamum (CE 131-201), the doctor to gladiators, was the author of many medical texts. Like Hippocrates, Galen practiced at his school of medicine, a site that still may be visited today. He was intrigued by the process of rapid intoxication and the effects of wine on the human physiological system once the beverage entered the body. A number of passages in his works compare wine and water, and differentiate the two:

[Regarding people who readily drink wine] the fluid which they have drunk is rapidly absorbed through the body and almost the whole of it is passed by the kidneys within a very short time. For here, too, the rapidity with which the fluid is absorbed depends on appropriateness of quality, on the thinness of the fluid, on the width of the vessels and their mouths, and on the efficiency of the attractive faculty. The parts situated near the alimentary-canal, by virtue of their appropriateness of quality, draw in the imbibed food for their own purposes, then the parts next to them in their turn snatch it away, then those next again take it from these, until it reaches the vena cava [the major heart vein], whence finally the kidneys attract that part of it which is proper to them. Thus it is in no way surprising that wine is taken up more rapidly than water, owing to its appropriateness of quality, and, further, that the white clear kind of wine is absorbed more rapidly owing to its thinness, while black turbid wine is checked on the way and retarded because of its thickness (On the Natural Faculties. 3:15:213-214).

Galen also investigated an especially interesting use of wine blended with clay in medical practice, and commented upon its protective role. In his time, wine frequently was mixed with crushed tablets or *terra sigillata* [tablets similar to these], then drunk to cure a range of medical complaints. Commonly, *terra sigillata* tablets were embossed with the image or symbol of Ge, the ancient Mediterranean earth mother (Halsted, 1968). Galen presumably visited the Greek

island of Limnos in the eastern Aegean, where clay used to make the *terra sigillata* was dug from pits at the northeast end of the island, and the tablets prepared using molds and stamps. In his medical text, *On Simple Drugs*, Galen wrote that *terra sigillata* mixed with wine and sour vinegar, cured rabies if applied to a dog bite (Cited by Brock, 1929, p. 194).

Elsewhere in the same text Galen described how *terra sigillata* tablets, crushed and mixed with different varieties of wine, were used in medical treatment:

[The tablets should be] dissolved in sweet wine, boiled wine, mead, or one of the white, tawny, or yellow wines as required; some are dissolved in vinegar, or in wine, water, vinegar-and-honey, sour wine and water, and honey-mixture. [Such] Limnean earth dissolved in any of the above makes a suitable application to promote the closure of recent wounds, and to cure [patients who] are chronic, slow to [heal], or [are] malignant (On Simple Drugs. 9:2; cited by Brock, 1929, p. 195).

Numerous ancient Greek and Roman writers other than physicians commented upon social and medical roles played by wine. Numerous wine-related accounts are found throughout the writings of Herodotus of Halicarnassus (BCE 484-408), Socrates of Athens (BCE 469-399), Plato of Athens (BCE 430-347), Aristotle of Stageira (BCE 383-321), Strabo of Amasia (BCE 66-25), Diodorus of Agyrium (BCE 60-8), Pliny of Verona (CE 23-79), Plutarchus of Chaeronea (CE 46-127), Athenaeus of Naucratis (CE 170-230), Porphyry of Tyre (CE 232-306), and others.

The philosopher Plato commented upon social responsibility associated with drinking wine. In a text frequently cited by both ancient and 20th century authors, Plato described the proper and improper ages for wine-drinking. He made the case that wine was wasted on youth and should be reserved for the elderly:

Boys under eighteen shall not taste wine at all; for one should not conduct fire to fire; wine in moderation may be tasted until one is thirty years old, but the young man should abstain entirely from drunkenness and excessive drinking; but when a man is entering upon his fortieth year he,

after a feast at the public mess, may summon the other gods and particularly call upon Dionysus to join the old men's holy rite, and their mirth as well, which the god has given to men to lighten their burden -- wine, that is, the cure for the crabbedness of old age, whereby we may renew our youth and enjoy forgetfulness of despair (Laws. 2:666:A-B).

Many 20th and 21st century scholars recall Pliny for his attraction to unusual biological and natural phenomena, and for the fact that he died during the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius when he went ashore presumably to observe the events first hand. Pliny was a master compiler of natural history facts and trivia, some fact, some fiction. Wine, certainly loved by Pliny, is mentioned extensively throughout his *Natural History*. In one account he presents both the dark and light sides to wine pleasures, and reveals a sharp dichotomy regarding male and female use of wine use by Romans of his time:

At Rome women were not allowed to drink [wine]. Among various instances we find that the wife of Egnatius Maetennus was clubbed to death by her husband for drinking wine from the vat, and [he was] acquitted . . . A matron was starved to death by her relatives for having broken open the casket containing the keys of the wine-cellar; and Cato says that the reason why women are kissed by their male relations is to know whether they smell of tippie (Natural History. 14:14:89).

In another passage Pliny waxed eloquent on the agreeable nature of wine:

There are two liquids that are specially agreeable to the human body, wine inside and oil outside (Natural History. 19:29:150).

Plutarchus of Chaeronea, the famed Greek observer of social behavior, wrote on both positive and negative roles of wine. He was especially interested in intoxication and observed that some individuals could "hold" their wine, whereas others became intoxicated quickly after only light drinking. Plutarchus also shot his barbs at playwrights, and accused some of composing their works while intoxicated. In other passages, Plutarchus also identified gender differences between

men and women in regard to intoxication rates - themes expanded upon and revealed in his essay, *Table Talk*. Here are some selected passages from his texts:

[Although] the drunkard is insolent and rude . . . on the other hand, the complete teetotaler is disagreeable and more fit for tending children than for presiding over a drinking-party (Table Talk. 1:620:C).

Just as the mixtures of wine and water vary with different waters . . . so does toleration for wine vary from person to person (Table Talk. 1:620:E).

Aeschylus allegedly wrote his tragedies while drinking, indeed thoroughly heated with wine (Table Talk. 1:622:D-E).

There is no way of getting to know a man who eats and drinks in silence . . . drinking leads to talk, and talking involves laying bare . . . that [which] is otherwise hidden . . . Wine reveals . . . and displays us by not allowing us to keep quiet; on the contrary, it destroys our artificial patterns of behavior (Table Talk. 3:645:B-C).

Aristotle [said] people who drink [wine] all in one gulp . . . are the people least apt to fall into a state of intoxication, since the wine does not linger in them, but proceeds through the body and is pushed out by the force of the draught . . . we usually see women drinking in this fashion (Table Talk. 3:650:B-C).

When [old men] drink, it is likely that the wine is soaked up, for their bodies because of dryness are like sponges; and then the wine lies there and afflicts them with its heaviness. For just as flood-waters run off from compact soils and do not make mud, but are soaked up in greater degree by soils of loose texture, so in the bodies of old men wine lingers on, attracted by the dryness there (Table Talk. 3:650:D).

Wine-lovers . . . get bald at an early age and their hair turns gray before their prime . . . (Table Talk. 3:652:F).

It is through conversation that wine channels from the body and distributes through the character a generous influence that permeates the whole man . . . Conversation steadies those who drink adding through relaxation an element of gaiety and kindly sociability . . . since wine makes the company pliable and ready to take an impression . . . from the seal of friendship (Table Talk. 3:660:B-C).

In another essay, *On Music*, Plutarchus, penned a delightful passage where he explained that music was invented to bring order to riotous, drunken banquets --

For it is a fact that music was introduced [at feasts] for its efficacy in counteracting and soothing the heat latent in wine . . . music was introduced forasmuch as wine makes the bodies and minds of those who overindulge in it disorderly, while music by its order and balance brings us to the opposite condition and soothes us (On Music. 1146:F-1147A).

Scholars interested in the history of Mediterranean food and diet, however, turn to one source as the most important for understanding ancient Greek and Roman food-related practices. The document I refer to, of course, is *The Deipnosophists* or *Philosophers at Dinner*, written by Athenaeus, a Greek from the Egyptian delta village of Naucratis, southeast of Alexandria. In this classic work Athenaeus discussed the geographical distribution and regional dietetics and food practices of Mediterranean societies and others beyond the “Middle Sea”, to the east in India, north into Germany, and south into the African Saharan states. Athenaeus’ book is the most important food-related work to survive from antiquity for two reasons. First, he identified everyday and festival foods used by these diverse peoples, and second, he documented his sources and credited specific authors for their remarks about food and food-related issues. So doing, Athenaeus provided modern scholars with the names of more than 1,000 ancient authors who wrote on food-related topics, and he also provided the names of their texts as well. Within

this vast compilation are found numerous references to wine, both positive and negative attributes, coupled with insights and philosophical comments regarding the social roles of wine.

Athenaeus claimed the civilized world consisted of three types of people: *philoinos* (wine-lovers), those always ready to drink wine, *philopotes* (drink-lovers), persons eager to engage in drinking-bouts that ended in intoxication, and *kothonists* (cup-addicts), others who regularly drank to intoxication (10:433:B). More telling, however, was his conclusion that no human need was more intense, than the desire to drink wine (10:433:E).

Using his banquet discourse literary mechanism Athenaeus and his dinner guests reviewed the true joy and essence of drinking wine. The gathered banqueters agreed that wine possessed the power to forge friendships, through a process that warmed and fused the human soul (5:185:C), and they agreed that autumn was the best time of year, when one looked forward to eating meat from she-goats and swine, and could anticipate harvest, treading grapes, and wine production (7:282:B). In one of their eloquent moods, the dinner philosophers recalled the famous playwright, Aeschylus of Eleusis (born. BCE 525), and quoted his well-known turn of phrase: *bronze is the mirror of the outward form; wine the mirror of the mind* (10:427:E). The dinner guests also agreed with the poet, Panyasis, who wrote the following two passages:

Wine is as great a boon to earthly creatures as fire. It is loyal, a defender from evil, a companion to solace every pain. Yea, wine is the desired portion of the feast and of merry-making, of the tripping dance and of yearning love. Therefore, you should receive and drink it at the feast with glad heart, and when satisfied with food you should not sit still like a child, filled to overflowing, oblivious of the mirth (2:36:F-2:37:A).

And . . .

Wine is the best gift of gods to men, sparkling wine; every song, every dance, every passionate love, goes with wine. It drives all sorrows from men's hearts when drunk in due measure, but when taken immoderately it is a bane (2:37:A-B).

Beneficial attributes of wine were discussed by the dinner guests who argued that wine-drinking improved creativity in the arts. Still, Athenaeus, himself, cautioned would-be writers that while wine contributed to poetry, water should be avoided as a beverage if poets wanted to *produce anything of quality* (2:39:C). He recalled the words of Antiphanes of Athens (BCE 404-311) who said: *If a man fill himself too continually [with wine] he loses thought, but if he drink moderately he becomes full of ideas* (2:40:B-C). The banqueters also remembered that intoxication produced some marvelous results since *Aeschylus . . . was drunk when he wrote his tragedies* (10:428:F), and *Alcaeus the lyric poet and Aristophanes the comic poet also were drunk when they composed their works, and many other persons have contended in battle more gloriously when in a state of inebriety* (10:429:A).

The banqueters recalled a passage attributed to Pindar of Thebes (BCE 521-435) who wrote: *The time passed in drinking-parties expands, nourishes, and enlarges the soul; it rekindles and awakens, with the exercise of wisdom, every man's senses* (11:782:D).

The appropriate social and beneficial roles of wine and its use by elderly Greeks and Romans were reviewed by the dinner guests who quoted several writers from antiquity:

Aristotle of Stagira said: Wine bids an old man to dance even against his will (10:428:A).

Theophrastus of Eresus said: Wine consoles even the despondency of old age (11:463:C).

A creative, rationale for drinking wine to excess stressed civil, community spirit, and the need to maintain economic support for local wine shops:

You are a dead loss to the community if you drink water; for you wrong the farmer and the merchant. But I, when I drink wine to the full, make their profits good (4:163:B-C).

Even the dietary patterns of athletes was discussed at dinner and the example of Olympic wrestling champion, Milo of Croton (c. BCE 300) was used to illustrate the important dietary roles of consuming beef and drinking wine:

Milo of Croton [ate] twenty pounds of meat and as many of bread, and he drank three pitchers of wine [equal to c. 8 1/2 quarts] . . . at Olympia he put a four-year old bull on his shoulders and carried it around the stadium; after which he cut it up and ate it all alone in a single day (10:412:E-F).

A wide range of medical views on wine were expressed by Athenaeus who was curious about the consequences of temperance and intemperance, and effect of each behavior on the human body, whether positive and negative:

Homer of Chios said: Wine relaxes and enervates bodily vigor (1:10:B).

Aristotle of Stagira said: Men who have been intoxicated with wine fall down face foremost, whereas they who have drunk barley beer lie outstretched on their backs; for wine makes one top-heavy, but beer stupefies (1:34:B).

The banqueters discussed the difficulty of managing the proper quantity of to drink, how to balance dining with pleasure, how to reduce intoxication and regulate its impact, then agreed it was important to remain aware of one's surroundings. Throughout their discussions they commented on the negative attributes of wine:

Three bowls [of wine] only do I mix for the temperate . . . one to health, which they empty first, the second to love and pleasure, the third to sleep. When this is drunk up wise guests go home. The fourth bowl is ours no longer, but belongs to violence; the fifth to uproar, the sixth to drunken revel, the seventh to black eyes. The eighth is the policeman's, the ninth belongs to biliousness, and the tenth to madness and hurling the furniture. Too much wine, poured into one little vessel, easily knocks the legs from under the drinkers (2:36:B-C).

Drinkers not only reveal what they are, but also disclose the secrets of everybody else in their outspokenness. Hence the saying, 'wine is truth also,' and 'wine reveals the heart of man' (2:37:E-F).

Homer of Chios said: Among the ancients it was neither customary to . . . drink to intoxication, but when they had poured libations and drunk all that heart desired, they went each to his own house (8:363:F).

Intoxication and associations between wine drinking, criminal and immoral behavior also were examined by Athenaeus and his guests who recalled that:

Wine is the [city] of all dread evils; from it comes intoxication, acts of madness, and drunken violence (10:443:C-D).

Alexis of Thurii said: And so, is not drunkenness the greatest bane in the world to mankind, and the most harmful . . . much wine causes the commission of many crimes (10:443:E-F).

Associations between wine, loss of reason, loss of sensory perception, social misjudgment, and alcohol-related marriage problems, also provided diversions throughout the banquet as the speakers continued to explore the mysteries of wine:

What pleasure [is there in] continual drunkenness? It robs a [person of] reason when still alive, and reason is the greatest boon our human nature has acquired (10:429:E).

The banqueters sought support for their view that drinking wine to excess produced adverse effects on family life, since it was ultimately the children of drunkards who suffered the most. To support their position they cited Plato of Athens, BCE 430-347, who wrote:

To drink to the point of intoxication is not proper to any other occasion except the festivals in honor of the god who gave the wine, and it is not safe; neither is it appropriate at the time when one is seriously engaged in the business of marriage, wherein, more than at any other time, bride and groom ought to be in their sound senses, since they are undergoing no little change in their lives; and at the same time, because their offspring ought in all cases to be born of sound-minded parents (10:431:F-10:432:A).

How wine was used and consumed by non-Greeks and Romans living in and beyond the Mediterranean basin captivated much of the conversation as the banqueters turned to social customs associated with wine drinking by the “barbarians:”

Poseidonius of Apamea related: We should not drink like the Car-man-i [a peoples whose homeland was between India and Persia] . . . These people, namely, eager to prove their friendship in their drinking bouts, open the veins of the forehead, and mixing the blood which streams down in their wine, they imbibe it, in the belief that to taste each other's blood is the highest proof of friendship (2:45:F-2:46:A).

Similarly, the alcoholic stupor and drinking behavior of Alexander the Great and his father Philip of Macedon were rationalized as part of the Macedonian character, and the banqueters recalled that:

The Macedonians . . . never understood how to drink in moderation, but rather drank deep at the beginning of a feast. Hence they were drunk while the first courses were still being served and could not enjoy their food (3:120:D-E).

Alexander [of Macedon] carried his carousing to such a point that he even went reveling in a chariot drawn by asses . . . perhaps, therefore, it was for this reason that he had no appetite for sexual indulgence (10:434:F).

Theopompus of Chios wrote: Philip, Alexander's father, was another drink-lover . . . Philip was a madcap and inclined to rush headlong into danger, partly by nature and partly because of drink; for he was a deep drinker, and was often drunk when he sallied into battle (10:435:A-B).

Adverse effects of excessive wine intake on human eyesight was a concern to the banqueters, as they recalled instances of famous Mediterranean wine drinkers who had destroyed their vision after years of immoderate wine consumption:

Dionysus the Younger, tyrant of Sicily . . . ruined his eyesight with wine. [And as] Aristotle [said] . . . Dionysus was [sometimes] drunk continuously for ninety days; hence his eyesight became rather dimmed (10:435:E).

The banqueters also reviewed the tragic consequences of irresponsible behavior that resulted in accidental suicide after wine intoxication:

[It was that] Cleo-me-nes of Lacedaemon . . . A drinker of unmixed wine . . . slashed himself to death with a knife in a fit of intoxication (10:436:E-F).

The physiological aftermath of intoxication, especially headache and hangover, were widely discussed by the speakers:

Alexis of Thurium claimed: If the headache only came to us before we drink to intoxication, no one would ever indulge himself in wine immoderately (10:429:E).

Athenaeus and his fellow diners reminisced and attempted to out-do each other as each identified texts from antiquity that demonstrated how drinking and intoxication were levelers of social status, and showed that the intemperate rich were not so different from the intoxicated poor:

[Wine is] the only blessing which all men have in common, nature's own cure to bring gladness. Hence come mirth, children dear, friendly greetings, dancing bands; of these blessings King

Wine has shown us the true nature. For that, father Dionysus, hail! . . . Grant long life, you helper to glorious deeds, to drink and sport, and have just thoughts (10:447:E-F).

Aristophanes of Athens said: But you can see that when men drink, then are they rich, they succeed, they win law-suits, they are happy, they help their friends (11:782:C).

Pindar of Thebes wrote: When the wearisome cares of men have vanished from their bosoms, and as on a sea of golden wealth, we all swim together to the shore of illusion; he that has no wealth is then rich, while they that are wealthy . . . expand their hearts, overmastered by the arrows of the vine (11:782:D).

Athenaeus also described the use of food tasters. He confirmed that this unenviable, dangerous position sometimes was assigned to elderly women beyond childbearing years:

Xenophon of Athens stated: The tyrant lives in distrust even of food and drink; why, instead of being the first to offer the gods the consecrating morsel, they bid their serving-men take a taste first because of their suspicion that even in this rite they may eat or drink something harmful - - first, the old woman will [be] the foretaster of your wine (4:171:E-F).

Athenaeus and his colleagues criticized the deplorable state of affairs that existed in the eastern Mediterranean at their time, how society had "gone to the dogs," and they recalled that other Greeks had reported similar views earlier in history. Athenaeus then recalled a passage attributed to Apollodorus of Athens, BCE 180-144, who lived more than 300 years earlier than the banqueters:

How much pleasanter things would be in our communities than they are today, if we completely changed our mode of living: every Athenian up to thirty years engaged in drinking; the Knights, wreathed and perfumed before the dawn, marching forth to revel in Corinth for ten days; the cabbage-vending Megarians boiling [cabbages] undisturbed . . . the Euboeans mixing wine. That would be luxury and real life! But we are slaves to an uncivilized fate (7:281:A).

Legal aspects of drinking behavior captivated the diners, especially Mediterranean customs that enforced the death penalty. As men, they held the common male view that women were especially fond of wine (10:440:E), then they examined various Mediterranean legal and social institutions that regulated drink and noted that:

Among the people of Mas-sil-ia, there was another law compelling women to drink only water. In Miletus, also, Theophrastus says, that this is customary even today (10:429:A-B).

Among the Romans neither a slave nor a free-born woman could drink wine, neither could the young men of the free class up to thirty years of age (10:429:B).

Polybius of Megalopolis said: Among the Romans women are forbidden to drink wine; but they drink what is called passum. This is made of raisins, and when drunk it tastes like the sweet wine of Aegos-the-na, or like the Cretan; hence they use it to counteract the urgency of thirst. But it is impossible for a woman to drink wine undetected; for, in the first place, the woman has no control over the store of wine; besides this, she must kiss her own and her husband's relations down to cousins' children, and do this every day as soon as she sees them. Finally, since the chances of meeting make it uncertain whom she will encounter, she is on her guard; for the situation is such that if she but take a small taste, nothing more need be said by way of accusation (10:440:E-F/10:441:A).

One passage by Athenaeus strikes a literary chord similar to the phrase "eat drink and be merry," as the banqueters pondered death, the ultimate fate of humans, and how the joys of wine both facilitated and eased life on earth:

Drink! play! Life is mortal, short is our time on earth . . . Let us drink, and drink our fill . . . Let us have a good time while we may still keep the life in our bodies . . . There's nothing nicer than the belly . . . Ethics, embassies, army tactics -- fine pretenses that sound hollow, like dreams.

Fate will snuff you out at the appointed time. You will have only what you eat and drink. All the rest is dust (8:336:C, F).

Towards the end of the banquet Athenaeus and his fellow dinner philosophers reviewed once again the origins and the social role of music:

Homer of Chios wrote: The [music] art is beneficial also to those who feast. And this was the accepted custom, it is plain, first in order that every one who felt impelled to get drunk and stuff himself might have music to cure his violence and intemperance, and secondly, because music appeases surliness; for, by stripping off a man's gloominess, it produces good-temper and gladness becoming to a gentleman (14:627:E).

After all had been said about food, music, and wine, Athenaeus and his colleagues composed a song and performed it at dinner for their enjoyment. And I end my presentation to you this morning with the words of this song . . . a text that we can sing together -- so maestro, strike-up the lyre, and let your voices boom out across the campus of California State University, Long Beach:

**ΣΥΝ ΜΟΙ ΠΙΝΕ
SIN ME PINE
DRINK WITH ME
* * *
συνηβα
SEN-E-VA
SPORT WITH ME
* * *
συνερα
SIN-A-RA
LOVE WITH ME
* * *
συστεφανηφορει
SISTE-FANE-FOR-E
WEAR WREATHS WITH ME
* * ***

ΣΥΝ ΜΟΙ ΜΑΙΝΟΜΕΝΩ ΜΑΙΝΕΘ
SIN ME MENO-MENO, ME-NE-O
RAGE WITH ME WHEN I AM RAGING

*** * ***

ΣΥΝ ΣΩΦΡΟΝΙ ΣΩΦΡΟΝΕΙ
SIN SO-FRONE, SO-FRO-NE
BE SOBER WHEN I AM SOBER

*Drink with me, sport with me, love with me, wear wreaths with me, rage with me when I
am raging, be sober when I am sober (15:695:D).*

Finally . . . south of Alexandria, Egypt, south of modern day Lake Mariout -- the ancient Lake Maroetis named after Maeron, a member of the vanguard of Dionysus -- the rich, desert soil there has born grapes since early Egyptian dynastic times.

Here grew the grapes made into Maroetic wines, a variety mentioned by Athenaeus. Then times changed: the ancient Egyptian dynasties passed to the Greeks, then to the Romans, then the Byzantines, then arrived the armies of Amr Ibn al-'As, and subsequently the Turks, then the French, and the British.

Through time the vineyards fell into disuse and were abandoned, and the desert reclaimed the land once again. But it was at this location, not distant from Naucratis, where Athenaeus was born, that during the late 19th century an interesting Greek visionary, Nestor Gianaclis -- with his copy of Athenaeus in hand -- walked the desert lands south of Alexandria, and realized the potential for revitalizing the local wine industry. And Nestor brought the land, set vines, and his company flourished produced and produced quality vintages from this once ancient site -- wine still produced today. . .

Thank you.