



**TOPICS FROM THE CONGRESS ORGANIZED BY WINE IN MODERATION WITH WIC AND IRVAS**

**WINE AND HEALTH: SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND INFORMATION, REJECTING PREJUDICE**

When consumed in moderation and as part of a healthy lifestyle, wine can offer potential health benefits. This was the central message to emerge from the international symposium, "Lifestyle, Diet, Wine & Health Congress," held in Rome. The researchers themselves made a collective call to reinvigorate the topic, opening a new season of scientific investigation and promoting transparent, neutral communication as a key ally in the provision of responsible and accurate information.

Rome became the global capital of nutrition for three days thanks to the congress, organised by Wine in Moderation, the Wine Information Council, and the Institute for Research on Wine, Food and Health (IRVAS) and held from 26 to 28 March. The event successfully re-established wine at the heart of scientific discussion, recognising its role in a balanced, traditional Mediterranean diet inspired by the principles of healthy living.

The primary takeaway from the collective contributions at the congress can be summarized as follows: an individual's health is influenced by a variety of factors, not just one. These factors carry different levels of importance as they work in synergy. It is essential to understand the role of each factor and how they interact. For instance, abstaining from wine holds little epidemiological relevance for someone who leads a sedentary lifestyle, smokes, is overweight, has an unbalanced diet, and experiences disrupted circadian rhythms, such as poor sleep patterns.

**WINE AND CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH**

One of the most compelling presentations was given by Miguel A. Martínez-González, who examined the relationship between wine consumption and cardiovascular health. In his talk titled "No red in the Med?" he presented the latest evidence on the role of red wine in the Mediterranean diet. Drawing on longitudinal studies and meta-analyses, he demonstrated that moderate wine consumption — defined as one glass per day for women and two for men — may be associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular events. This is attributed to the cardioprotective effects of polyphenols, such as resveratrol and proanthocyanidins.

The Spanish epidemiologist also emphasised the need for an active epidemiological study involving volunteers, divided into two groups, to compare the effects of zero and moderate alcohol consumption. This would help determine the outcomes in terms of overall health, ageing markers, and metabolic alterations (see main article).

**WINE AND CANCER RISK**

Another anticipated contribution came from Ramon Estruch, a researcher at the Instituto de Salud Carlos III in Madrid. In his lecture, "Do wine drinkers have an increased cancer risk?"

Epidemiological perspective and clinical aspects", Mr. Estruch addressed the complex and often controversial issue of alcohol and cancer. He reviewed recent epidemiological studies linking alcohol consumption to the incidence of specific cancers, particularly those affecting the oral cavity, oesophagus, and liver.

He showcased the complexity of this topic. While it is clear that excessive alcohol consumption can damage the tissues of the digestive tract, it is also important to note that, unlike many other alcoholic beverages, wine contains bioactive compounds with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, which may counteract some of the harmful effects of ethanol.

One of the most debated issues was the concept of a "threshold dose," or the level of alcohol consumption at which the negative effects outweigh the potential benefits. Mr. Estruch emphasised that ethanol metabolism varies between individuals and is influenced by genetic, epigenetic, and environmental factors. He also stressed the need for prospective clinical studies to assess the cancer risk associated with moderate wine consumption compared to other alcoholic beverages — thereby introducing a crucial distinction between fermented and distilled beverages. The former are embedded in the Mediterranean cultural tradition, whereas the latter are not.

**PRIORITIZING SCIENTIFIC CLARITY OVER IDEOLOGICAL BELIEFS**

The congress began with opening remarks by Sandro Sartor, President of Wine in Moderation who highlighted the importance of clear communication.

"Our aim is to promote moderate consumption and educate consumers," he said. "This is why we set up the Wine Information Council within Wine in Moderation. We want to ensure that science remains central to the conversation, and that our approach is adjusted based on its findings. We are neither deniers nor conspiracy theorists — we seek clear answers from research. While

we fully recognise that alcohol abuse harms health, it is essential to advocate evidence-based information and consistently promote moderation."

The need to defend wine from ideological attacks and emphasise its role in moderate, diet-linked consumption within the Mediterranean tradition was echoed by key figures in the wine supply chain and vineyard technology sectors. Support for this was further reinforced by companies from the international SIMEL trade fair for beverage technologies, with Dal Cin, Crealis, Amorim Cork Italia and Vason Group providing sponsorship for the Rome event.



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