

The Good Bottle of Wine

There was once a young man who enjoyed drinking wine. It didn't matter what kind of wine since they all tasted pretty much the same. This made life simple. When deciding on what to buy, price could be the only criterion, and the young man was able to drink a substantial quantity of wine, even on a modest budget.

There was only one drawback to this satisfying state of affairs: the young man's friends made relentless fun of his backward tastes. So occasionally he would splurge on a better vintage, just for the show, pretending to his friends that he could tell the difference while ruing the pointless added expense. And when his friends were not around he went back to the satisfying bargain brand.

Until one evening something remarkable happened. Relenting to the recommendations of a particularly knowledgeable acquaintance he had paid an absurd sum for a bottle of some French nonsense that he had been assured even *he* would appreciate more than "that swill you're used to." And lo, he did notice the difference. It was not a lot better, not remotely worth the price differential, but it was unmistakably better.

On his next trip to the wine store his wallet politely suggested that it would be a while before he would enjoy that French nonsense again. Unperturbed, he reached for an economically-priced stalwart, a reliable companion many times in the past. Comfortably encouched at home he unscrewed the top and admired the bubbles. The first taste was a shock. Surely there had been a mistake; someone had poured a mixture of vinegar and grapefruit juice into this old familiar bottle. But the second taste confirmed the worst: This was, in fact, his old compatriot, now turned enemy – revealed for the venal charlatan it was, and always had been. A thrill of pride shot through him as he relegated the remainder of the bottle to the kitchen sink and the pride grew as he wrung his couch and sock drawer for enough to warrant a trip back to the store for a palatable vintage.

Back at home he recognized that the transformation was complete, that he *could* tell the better from the worse, and that, courtesy of his heightened sensibility, wine-drinking would henceforth be a deeper, richer and more pleasant experience than it ever was before. And so it is -- though not as frequent.