

EDITORIAL

How is your carbon footprint?



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“It is far from easy to determine whether Nature has proved to man a kind parent or a merciless stepmother”

Gaius Plinius Secundus (AD 23/24–79), called *Pliny the Elder* was a Roman natural philosopher (Fig. 1).

There is no doubt that, whether you are a climate change believer or a climate-change denier, there has been a definite change in the zeitgeist, with personal responsibility playing a much more prominent role than here-to-fore. It's not that long since frequent flyers, usually executives who like to travel in business class, were boasting about their status, and virtually ignoring their 'carbon footprint.' There has been a bewildering amount of claim and counter-claim in the media with the majority of blame being laid at the feet of the large multinationals.

I don't know about you, but weather extremes, fierce storms, forest fires [1] (Fig. 2) flooding, and drought, seem to be much more frequent occurrences than I can remember in my youth. Although forest fires produce human misery and destruction it seems that "smoke tint" in wine is not a major problem as in most cases the grape harvest had been completed before the fires. In some areas of the world, climate change appears to herald benefits [2]. whereas, in others, the opposite is the experience. I don't know if you believe in climate change reports but they exist in abundance [3]. The latest United Nations (UN) report on climate change should be a cause for concern.

According to Ben Spencer, writing in the Sunday Times [4] in February 2022, it is already too late to reverse some of the effects: *some options for climate resistant development have already been forfeited by past societal choices.*

What has this to do with wine? Most wine is not consumed in the area/country in which it is produced. Therefore, wine, like many other commodities is often transported a long distance, before consumption. There are a number of ways to transport wine: in bulk, often by ship, wine can be transported in cardboard containers or most commonly in bottles [5]. Bulk transport of wine is often to countries like The Netherlands, where it is blended, bottled and labelled for large supermarkets, often with surprisingly good results. 'Wine in a box' [6] may be of reasonably good quality but there seems to be a psychological resistance to its consumption. However, many people to whom I have spoken find 'wine in a box' quite acceptable for everyday consumption. I presume snobbery plays a part for those who don't!

Is the weight of a wine bottle important? Yes, wine bottles, full or empty are commonly transported by air, thus, adding to the carbon footprint. For some bizarre reason, some wine makers are bottling their wine in larger and heavier bottles than the standard 75mls. I presume some consumers think wine in such bottles is

better!! I and others find it irritating. These bottles are more expensive to transport and add more to CO₂ emissions. They take up more space in the cellar and many modern wine storage systems cannot easily accommodate them.

What about using something other than glass to store wine? Well, believe it or not, wine bottles, made from cardboard (Fig. 3) have entered the market [7]. However, tradition, snobbery and resistance to change will make it very difficult, in my view, to replace glass bottles. Cardboard wine bottles also require a liner to hold the liquid. Although gaining a little foothold in China, as yet, cardboard wine bottles, have not had a huge impact in Europe or North America. Somehow I can't imagine building a collection of cardboard wine bottles and the question of longevity has not been adequately addressed, although I suppose cardboard wine bottles will be used for young wines.

In the meantime I think I'll continue to drink wine from a glass bottle and eschew wine from the dreaded plastic bottles served in 'coach' class.



Fig. 1 Pliny the Elder. Statue of Pliny the Elder, Santa Maria Maggiore, Como, Italy. Creative Commons attribution-Share Alike 3.0 unported.

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Fig. 2 A forest fire. Apple Fire, Beaumont, California, USA July 2020. Creative Commons attribution 4.0 international.



Fig. 3 A cardboard wine bottle. Cardboard wine bottle, 2019. thedrinkcompany.com, London, UK.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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