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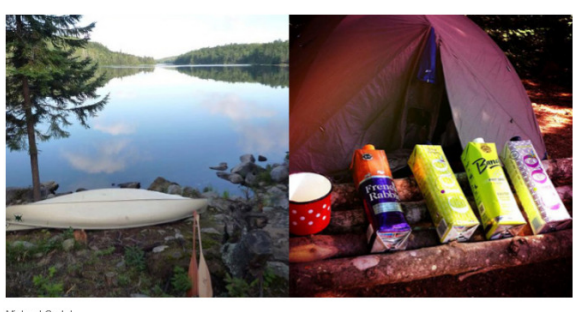
A canoe tripper's ode to boxed wine



Michael Godel

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Michael Godel
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At the end of a long day paddling and portaging the lakes and rivers of Algonquin Park, nothing satisfies like a good mug of boxed wine. I know what you're thinking. Beer? Come on, it's a canoe trip. Into the pristine, wild interior of Ontario's greatest nature preserve. If this isn't a desideratum that calls for thinking outside the glass, what is?

Portage sign

Flipping down

Eric Asimov once reported that to a snob, wine housed in a multilayer, aseptic carton was "…the epitome of *déclassé*, the vinous equivalent of trailer trash." Then he noted, "the idea of putting wine in a box, or more accurately, in a bag within a box, is brilliant." The cartons have been criticized for allowing flavour-destroying oxygen to seep in, when in fact the wine can stay fresh for weeks once it has been opened. Perfect for a canoe trip. Hey, that redneck wine also aids in the removal of "ladybug taint," an industry-wide, chemical-bad taste caused by alkyd-methoxypyrazines. Yep, soaked up by the packaging and essentially removed from the wine.

Afternoon paddle

This lament cries out for the golden era of boxed wine. Where not too long ago a proliferation of quality abounded, locally available brands are now prohibitively limited. Where are you Bandit Cabernet Sauvignon? Who took away my Black Box out of Paso Robles? Why did the Aussies run away; yes you Hardys and Banrock Station.

I did manage to locate four decent cartons to taste on the trip. The consensus number one was the Ciao Sangiovese.

Boxed wines

Three Thieves Bandit Pinot Grigio (622019, 1L, $12.95) is made by California's Trinchero from regions "not specified." Pallid complexion, almost achromatic, like cheap Soave. Cheesy, effluence of a Petawawa tributary, Joycian "corpse of milk" aroma but rescued by coquettish, juicy fruit, Courtney Jaye flavour. Makes for a decent aperitif chilled straight out of the food barrel. When it comes to box wine, "the bottom of the barrel ain't bad when you make it feel like home." Eaten alive by the *Phó Bò Tái Nạm* and the Halibut. **83**

Ciao Bianco Pinot Grigio Carton (669200, 1L, $11.95) out of Italy's Veneto region is the forward-thinking work of Cantine Luigi Sgarzi. Lambent, ochroid and organic, green head-water lake hued. Intensely dry and spartan for the varietal. Snappish yellow plum anointed with tarragon to support corn pasta, black olives, peas and carrots. **84**

Pasta with Ciao Sangiovese

Ciao Sangiovese Organic Carton (29090, 1L, $11.95) puts overripe fruit and maximum colour extraction to good use. Moderate heft, renascent Tuscan red fruit of a Chumbawamba straw flask era. Sincere, sugarplum, anarcho-rocker Sangiovese for straightforward campsite consumption. A friend to red sauce and to Padano Parmesan. *Ciao Bella*. **86**

French Rabbit Cabernet Sauvignon Carton (621680, $12.95) is contentious and inchoate of composition like oil poured over troubled water. That said, it's an easy quaff. Fructifying enough to consume with nary an ill effect. Tiny molecules of mint, mineral and wild blueberry. The least interesting of the four but sneaks in under the wire for back country needs. **82**

Moose skull on Little Trout Lake

How do you feel about boxed wine?

- I've bought it and I'd buy it again
- I've tried it and no thanks!
- I haven't tried it but might
- I'd take it camping or boating
- It's just a bad idea

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Good to go!

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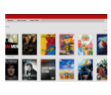

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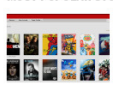

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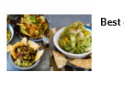

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Michael Godel

Professional cook of 25 years. Wine guy at Barque Smokehouse. Alternate blog at vintagedirect.wordpress.com

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