



On January 31, 2011, the FDA released its dietary and nutritional guidelines for 2010. Every 5 years since 1980 the FDA has released nutritional guidelines which are recommendations by nationally recognized experts designed to promote health and reduce the risk of major chronic diseases.

The WineDoctors first visited the topic when the preliminary draft was released in July 2010. WineDoctors took the opportunity to express formal opinions to the FDA through our international affiliation with ISFAR. Now we take a look at the final results.

Extracting the pertinent material related to alcohol consumption, the FDA formally defines moderate alcohol consumption, heavy or high risk drinking and binge drinking. While they acknowledge that excessive and binge drinking can be harmful, they are aware that 50 percent of adults consume alcohol on a regular basis. They acknowledge that moderate drinking may have beneficial effects, citing increasingly strong evidence with regard to cardiovascular health, cognitive function, and all-cause mortality. This is balanced by a recognized increased risk of the incidence of breast cancer, injuries and accidents, violence and motor vehicle accidents with moderate alcohol consumption.

The FDA goes on to state that there is good evidence that breastfeeding women who desire to drink in moderation may safely continue. They suggest a timed strategy citing alcohol elimination biochemistry. FDA nutritional guidelines do emphasize that there are certain groups that should not drink: those who cannot restrict consumption to moderate levels, those not of legal drinking age, women who are pregnant or may become pregnant as no safe level of consumption has been established. Others groups include those on medications which would contra-indicate alcohol use, have medical conditions, or plan to drive or operate machinery.

They go on to create context for the role of alcohol consumption in a balanced diet, creating awareness of the additional calories which are encountered and the importance of meeting nutritional requirements if alcohol is included in the diet. They state that a serving of alcohol accounts for 82 kcal at 7 calories per gram but depends on the type of alcoholic beverage consumed. They are consistent with most reproducible literature that one drink is defined as 12 fluid ounces of regular beer (5% alcohol), 5 fluid ounces of wine (12% alcohol-clearly not a Napa Cabernet Sauvignon!), or 1.5 fluid ounces of 80 proof (40% alcohol) distilled spirits with one drink containing .6 fluid ounces of alcohol.

They go on to note that moderate alcohol consumption is not associated with weight gain in healthy adults, but over consumption is. Weight loss strategies can focus on this particular phenomenon.

Overall, the 2010 FDA nutritional guidelines offer a balanced review of the present literature in moderate alcohol consumption, does not overemphasize heavy drinking, and incorporates

suggestions that mirror the dietary pyramid and Mediterranean diet.