I have a friend who is a consummate wine snob. She's a vocal defender of the Old World winemaking traditions and has been known to drone for hours on the virtues of Bordeaux *terroirs*. She was positively offended last week when she saw me slip a "juice box" in my bag on our way to the dog park. "How can you drink that?" she screeched, pointing at my handy 500 ml Bota Box of delicious California Pinot Grigio. Now to me, the adult juice box is the greatest invention since the drive-through window, so I was preparing to defend my fondness for the box. Turns out her outrage wasn't directed at the box, it was at the California wine it contained. My friend had never wittingly subjected her sophisticated palate to the insult of domestic "faux wine."

Time for a lesson on the Great Big Deal that is California wine, my friend.

THANK GOD FOR CALIFORNIA WINE

No, really. Thank God. Viticulture came to California in the 18th century with the Spanish monks, who made wine for sacraments—and a bit of daily tippling. (So *that's* where the Mission Grape came from).

THANK GOD FOR CALIFORNIA WINE, PART TWO

Prohibition would have wiped out California winemaking if it wasn't for the monks who were allowed to make wine for religious purposes. From the measly 140 mission vineyards left after Prohibition was repealed grew the mighty 1200 that now account for 90% of American wine production.

NO, SNOOTY FRENCH PEOPLE, YOUR WINE IS NOT THE BEST

By the 1970s, California wineries had recovered from the curse of Prohibition and were using modern technologies to improve the quality of their wines, but they struggled to gain an international following. In 1976, a blind tasting challenge, known as the Judgment of Paris, was conducted, pitting the finest French wines against the finest California wines. The event was even judged by the finest snooty French judges. The California wines swept the table in every category, causing the snooty French judges' heads to explode. Just as we spanked the French in athletics at the '76 Olympics, we spanked them at their winey claim to fame.

NO, SNOOTY FRENCH PEOPLE, YOUR WINE IS NOT THE BEST, PART TWO

The French stayed sore, naturally, and it didn't help when the contest was repeated 30 years later in 2006 with the exact same results, surprising precisely no one who actually drinks California wines.

CALIFORNIA WINES ARE LIKE THE MR UNIVERSE OF THE WINE WORLD

California's reliably warm climate allows wineries to use riper grapes, producing lush, more fruit-forward flavors—and higher alcohol content. Most California wines have ABV of at least 13.5%, and some approach 18%. Scrawny Old World wines are mostly cool climate varietals resulting in a lighter body and an anemic 12-12.5% ABV. If you were in a bar fight, who would you rather have your back: A big bold Napa Cabernet or a shirking French Chateauneuf du Pape?

CALIFORNIA WINES CARE ABOUT YOU

California wineries love their customers. They work to get your business want you to try their wines. They give you rebates and coupons—when's the last time you got a coupon from the French?

AND FOR THE WIN

California wineries invented the juice box. I rest my case.