

Tailgating Tips

Tailgating, The Essential Rite Of Football, Becomes A Classy Affair

(NAPSA)—Picnics in the parking lot are no longer about bratwurst and beer. Today, tailgaters are going gourmet. They are investing in cutting-edge gas grills that break down for easy packing, they are planning creative tailgate events and, most importantly, they are whipping up mouth-watering delicacies like ahi-tuna burgers and smoked pork chops for football fans to enjoy.

And increasingly, tailgaters are washing it all down not with sudsy beer, but with premium wine. In fact, wine has replaced beer as Americans' number-one preferred alcoholic beverage, according to a recent Gallup poll. Some wineries are taking the tailgating phenomenon to the next level by introducing single-serve, easy-to-carry versions of their award-winning wines.

Stone Cellars by Beringer, for instance, recently launched four easy-drinking varietals—Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Cabernet and Merlot—that come in both a 4-pack and 8-pack. The wine is conveniently packaged in shatter-proof bottles, allowing tailgaters to take it where other beverages in glass containers can't go.

"Unbreakable bottles are perfect for tailgaters," noted David Joachim, author of "The Tailgater's Cookbook." "Nationwide, Americans take their outdoor celebrations very seriously, from serving gourmet food to providing all the comforts of home. And since



GOING, GOING, GOURMET!—Many of today's tailgaters are whipping up mouthwatering delicacies.

you can enjoy Stone Cellars right from the bottle, you can have classy drinks in your cooler without worrying about wine openers or hauling glass bottles and stemware to the game."

Just how deeply ingrained is tailgating in American culture? A whopping 51 million people participated in tailgate parties during the 2004 football season, according to research firm Synovate, Inc. In fact, many football fans prefer to watch the game on portable TVs in the parking lot rather than in the stadium. And the competitive spirit seems to have also extended to the parking lot, where some teams, like the Houston Texans, even award prizes to the person hosting the best tailgate party.

Tailgating isn't just for football anymore. Opera goes in Santa Fe fill the parking lot on opening night and enjoy everything from fried chicken in the back of their SUVs to gourmet feasts complete with fine china, white linens, candelabra and wine on elegantly laid tables.

Here are some tips from Joachim, also known as the "Grill Master" for the American Tailgaters Association, to turn your next tailgate party into the perfect outdoor celebration:

- Get creative with the menu. Nothing stokes the competition like "grilling them." Cook up some Buffalo Burgers when your team plays the Bills, or Patriot Patties when you're up against New England. Stocking your cooler with singles of wine and sparkling water—in addition to beer and sodas—is an easy way to show the other team who's best.

- Keep your cool. Nothing takes the class out of a party like soggy food, so choose ice packs over cubes. They don't melt and they're reusable. Also, freeze bottles of water to use as ice blocks, and when they melt you have extra water for drinking and cleaning up!

- Toast your neighbors. The best tailgate parties are communal events. Share your appetizers or host a wine tasting with the folks next door. Using single-serve wines, like those from Stone Cellars, is an easy way to put on a class act without breaking the bank.