

People in four original blue zones areas drink alcohol moderately and regularly. The trick is to drink one to two glasses per day with friends and/or with food.

Aislinn Leonard  
Blue Zones



Red wine in moderation could be good for you, according to research and the Blue Zones Project. FRANCKREPORTER/GETTY IMAGES

# Raise a glass of wine with the Blue Zones Project

Liz Freeman  
Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

In case you need an excuse to drink wine, Feb. 18 is National Drink Wine Day.

In case you need another excuse, red wine in moderation could be good for you, according to research and the Blue Zones Project.

One of the “Power 9” concepts of the Blue Zones for improving health and longevity is “wine @ 5.”

A glass of wine or two each day with friends and food contributes to longevity, according to Dan Buettner, founder of the Blue Zones Project.

Peter Rizzo, the owner of Natural Wines in Naples, advises wine lovers to pursue healthy wines produced with a combination of green farming and natural yeasts.

“Seek out wines that are unfiltered, because that is where the good stuff resides for heart,” Rizzo said.

There is a worldwide movement of clean farming with wine-making, similar to how wine was made before World War II without additives or chemicals, Rizzo said. His store, at 4949 U.S. 41 N., Unit 102, carries 250 wines and ships to customers, and his website, [www.naturalwinesnaples.com](http://www.naturalwinesnaples.com), contains articles on the health benefits of natural wines.

The Blue Zones project was introduced to Southwest Florida in 2015 based on the travels of Buettner, a National Geographic explorer.

He identified communities worldwide where people share lifestyle traits and live to 100 or older. He wrote a New York Times best-seller about the nine principles of longevity.

The “Power Nine” include moving naturally by being physically active, eating a plant-slant diet, eating until you are 80 percent full and knowing your purpose in life. The other concepts are taking time to relax, having a healthy social network, belonging to a faith-based community and putting loved ones first.

The philosophy is that people can make simple changes in their daily practices to be healthier and, over time, the changes become natural.

Some examples are parking farther away at work to add daily steps, removing the bread basket at restaurants, removing the salt shaker from tables and substituting fruit for sugary snacks.

Organizations that are central to daily living — such as employers, government entities, grocery stores, restaurants, residential communities, churches and civic organizations — are changing practices to be healthier and have become Blue Zones-recognized.

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# Wine

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To date, 234 organizations have gained Blue Zones Project recognition or approval in Collier and Lee counties, and more than 500 organizations are participating in the initiative, according to Kate Walter, with the local Blue Zones Project.

Part of the reasoning behind “wine @ 5” as one of the Power 9 is that the compound resveratrol, found in the skin of grapes, is known to protect the body against damage to blood vessels, may reduce the “bad” cholesterol of low-density lipoprotein and may prevent blood clots, according to the Mayo Clinic.

“Some research shows that resveratrol could be linked to a lower risk of inflammation and blood clotting, which can lead to heart disease,” according to a Mayo Clinic article published in January. “But other studies found no benefits from resveratrol in preventing heart disease. More research is needed to determine if resveratrol lowers the risk of inflammation and blood clotting.”

In 2017, Medical News Today published an article that referenced numerous studies about resveratrol and how it may offer health benefits, from boosting heart health to preventing some kinds of cancer.



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Researchers at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine found resveratrol may protect the brain from stroke damage.

Still, a global study published in 2018 in the international medical journal *The Lancet* concluded there is no safe level of drinking alcohol.

The study, part of the annual Global Burden of Disease, assessed alcohol-related health outcomes and patterns from 1990 to 2016 in 195 counties. Nearly 3

million deaths globally were attributed to alcohol use. The study did not distinguish among beer, wine and hard liquor.

The Blue Zones Project website shares how the residents of Sardinia, Italy, are famous for their daily consumption of a regional red wine called Cannonau, which has two times the level of flavonoids, or antioxidants, that may lower risk of heart attacks.

Wine in moderation also may be beneficial if it is consumed with a Mediterranean diet that includes greens, beans, nuts, olive oil and whole grains, and low consumption of meat, according to The Blue Zones.

Buettner teamed up with Healthways, a health consulting firm, in 2009 to develop and launch a detailed program to help guide communities to better health and wellness practices. The Blue Zones Project now works with Sharecare, a digital health company in Atlanta.

Early adopters of the Blue Zones Project include Albert Lea, Minnesota; and Spencer and Waterloo, Iowa, along with other cities in Iowa.

In addition, projects are underway in Hawaii, Oklahoma, Oregon and Wisconsin. All told, more than 42 communities in nine states have launched Blue Zones Projects.

The NCH Healthcare System is underwriting the costs of the Blue Zones Project in Southwest Florida.