

World's Earliest Wine

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Found at a Neolithic village site in Iran, this jar was one of six vessels containing the remains of 7,000-year-old wine. (Courtesy The University of Pennsylvania Museum)

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Residue on a potsherd dating to the time of the first permanent settlements in the Middle East suggests that wine-making began 2,000 years earlier than previously thought. The sherd, ca. 7,000 years old, came from one of six two-and-one-half-gallon jars excavated two decades ago from the kitchen area of a mud-brick building in Hajji Firuz Tepe, a Neolithic village in Iran's northern Zagros Mountains. Using infrared spectrometry, liquid chromatography, and a wet chemical test, Patrick E. McGovern and a team from the [University of Pennsylvania Museum](#) found calcium salt from tartaric acid, which occurs naturally in large amounts only in grapes. Resin from the terebinth tree was also present, presumably used as a preservative, indicating that the wine was deliberately made and did not result from the unintentional fermentation of grape juice.

Analysis of the Hajji Firuz Tepe sherd comes in the wake of two other recent discoveries of early wine-making in this region where grapes grow in the wild. Residue from a jar from Godin Tepe, in the nearby middle Zagros Mountains, was dated to 5,100 years ago, until now the earliest evidence of wine-making. Grape presses dating to the late third millennium B.C. have been found at Titris Höyük in southeastern Turkey.

<http://www.archaeology.org/9609/newsbriefs/wine.html>

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