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**Alcoholic Beverages**

Modern alcoholic beverages are different from ancient wine.

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  - A. Ancient methods yield a low alcoholic content

- B. Modern methods yield a high alcoholic content

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  - A. Ancient wine was always diluted with water

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## The Experts

“In all these countries [Syria, Palestine, Egypt], wine was always diluted with water, a long-standing custom in Mediterranean regions, where pure potable water is not very common.” (R.J. Forbes, Professor of the History of Pure and Applied Sciences in Antiquity, University of Amsterdam, in *Encyclopedia Americana*, 29:44–45, 1989)

“The wine of classical antiquity, however, was very different from modern wine. They . . . always diluted it with water before consumption . . . . Only barbarians drank undiluted wine.” (Maynard A. Amerine, *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, 1994, vol. 23, p. 518)

## The Evidence

*Drink and Be Merry: Wine and Beer in Ancient Times*, by Michal Dayagi–Mendels (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1999).

“It is known that the Jews, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, avoided strong, concentrated wine, which the Talmud calls *yayin hai*; instead they drank only wine that had been mixed with water. This was not only to avoid becoming intoxicated, but also because diluted wine was healthier than plain water, which was known to be contaminated. Diluted wine was regarded as a proper and pleasing drink and even becomes a metaphor for cultured behavior: ‘For, just as it is disagreeable to drink wine alone or water alone, whereas the mixing of the two gives a pleasant and delightful taste, so too variety of style in a literary work charms the ear of the reader’ (2 Maccabees 15:39).” [60]

“The Greeks . . . used to mix their wine with water in different ratios, such as 3:2 or 3:1, which enabled them to drink large quantities at a time. The drinking of undiluted wine was considered barbaric; it was, as the Greeks put it, “to drink like a Scythian.” Herodotus writes that King Cleomenes of Sparta, under Scythian influence, adopted the custom of drinking undiluted wine and went mad as a result.” [71]

“When the ceremonial part of the evening had been completed, the host decided on the ratio of water to wine to be employed and on the pace of the drinking for that evening. The ratio was generally determined on the basis of the type of wine being served and its strength. The traditional proportions were 3:1, 5:2, or 5:3; in certain instances, the wine was so strong that it had to be mixed at a ratio of 20:1. The resulting alcohol content of the drink was less than what is common for modern-day beer.” [88]

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