3,700 Year-Old Wine

Would you drink wine flavoured with mint, honey and a dash of psychotropic resins? Ancient Canaanites did more than 3,000 years ago.

Archaeologists have unearthed what may be the oldest -- and largest -- ancient wine cellar in the Near East, containing forty jars, each of which would have held fifty litres of strong, sweet wine. The cellar was discovered in the ruined palace of a sprawling Canaanite city in northern Israel, called Tel Kabri. The site dates to about 1,700 B.C. and isn't far from many of Israel's modern-day wineries.

"This is a hugely significant discovery -- it's a wine cellar that, to our knowledge, is largely unmatched in age and size," says Eric Cline chair of the Department of Classical and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations of at The George Washington University. Cline and Assaf Yasur-Landau, chair of the Department of Maritime Civilizations at the University of Haifa, co-directed the excavation. Andrew Koh, assistant professor of classical studies at Brandeis University, was an associate director.

The team's findings will be presented this Friday in Baltimore at the annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

Archaeological scientist Andrew Koh who was an associate director of the excavation analyzed the jar fragments using organic residue analysis.



PHOTO: GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

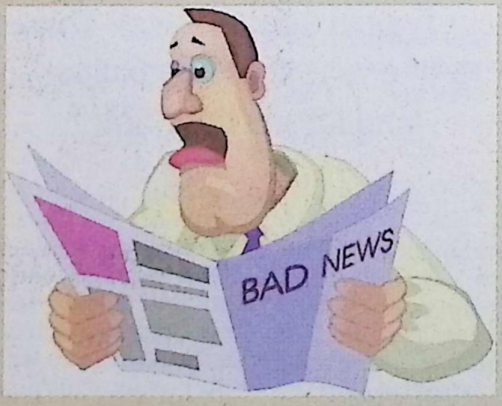
These 3,700-year-old jars were discovered in an ancient palatial wine cellar unearthed by researchers at Tel Kabri in July 2013.

He found molecular traces of tartaric and syringic acid, both key components in wine, as well as compounds suggesting ingredients popular in ancient wine-making, including honey, mint, cinnamon bark, juniper berries and resins. The recipe is similar to medicinal wines used in ancient Egypt for two thousand years.

At the end of the excavation, the team discovered two doors leading out of the wine cellar -- one to the south, and one to the west. Both probably lead to additional storage rooms. They'll have to wait until 2015 to find out for sure.

The Good News in Bad News

Psychology shows that it doesn't take much to put you in a bad mood. Just reading the morning news can do it. And being in a bad mood slows your reaction time, and affects your basic cognitive abilities like speech, writing, and counting.



But new research by Dr. Moshe Shay Ben-Haim, Yaniv Mama, Michal Icht, and Daniel Algom of Tel Aviv University's School of Psychological Sciences now reveals that repeated exposure to a negative event neutralizes its effect on your mood and your thinking.

"A bad mood is known to slow cognition," says Dr. Ben-Haim. "We show that, counterintuitively, you can avoid getting into a bad mood in the first place by dwelling on a negative event. If you look at the newspaper before you go to work and see a headline about a bombing or tragedy of some kind, it's better to read the article all the way through and repeatedly expose yourself to the negative information. You will be freer to go on with your day in a better mood and without any negative effects."