



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

French Wines Return from Year in Space

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SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft landed off the coast of Florida Wednesday night carrying research materials, equipment and 12 bottles of French **wine**.

But not just any wine!

These bottles of wine and some **grapevines** had spent about a year in the International Space Station, orbiting the world in the name of science.

The wine will not be opened until the end of February. That is when Space Cargo Unlimited plans to open a bottle or two for an out-of-this-world wine tasting in Bordeaux, France.

Agricultural science is the main goal of the research, says Nicolas Gaume, the company's chief and co-founder. But he admits it will be fun to try the wine. He will be among the lucky few taking a taste, along with some French wine experts.

Months of chemical testing will follow. Researchers want to see how space changed the wine's sedimentation and **bubbles**. Sedimentation is the process in which material is carried to the bottom of a liquid.

Gaume told the Associated Press that his company's goal is to try to understand "how we're going to have an agriculture tomorrow that is both **organic** and healthy and able to feed humanity." Gaume added, "we think space has the **key**."

With climate change, Gaume added agricultural products like grapes will need to be able to live in more difficult conditions. Through a series of space experiments, Space Cargo Unlimited hopes to take what is learned to make plants stronger on Earth.

There is another reason for doing such space research. Gaume expects future explorers to the moon and Mars will want to enjoy some of Earth's nice things. "Being French, it's part of life to have some good food and good wine," he said.

The wine bottles were kept in steel containers for safety when they went to the space station on a Northrop Grumman ship in November 2019. The 320 pieces of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon vines, called canes in the grape-growing business, left on the SpaceX spacecraft last March.

At this time, SpaceX's Dragon is the only spacecraft capable of returning space station experiments and other items to Earth. Others burn up in the atmosphere on their return.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

Marcia Dunn reported on this story for the Associated Press. John Russell adapted it for Learning English. Hai Do was the editor.

Words in This Story

wine – *n.* an alcoholic drink made from the juice of grapes

grapevine – *n.* a climbing plant on which grapes grow

bubble – *n.* a tiny, round ball of air or gas inside a liquid

organic – *adj.* of food : grown or made without the use of artificial chemicals