

Political Wine

When she was still writing for Bloomberg, Megan McArdle did a winetasting of two wine clubs: National Review and The Nation. The former is conservative, the latter is very liberal. Hence, political wine. Her article is pretty entertaining as well as being informative. The specific piece was ["Drinking to Blur Party Lines. A taste-test battle of two partisan wine clubs: National Review vs. the Nation"](#) (November, 2015). Forthwith, a few paragraphs.

Naturally, I had to subscribe to both. I imagined a titanic showdown between the somewhat stuffy traditionalist wines of the heirs to William F. Buckley, and the strident cosmopolitanism of the Nation's approach. Then I placed the orders, and realized that both wine clubs are supplied by the same third-party company.

In a way, this made things even more interesting. Would the wines in both shipments be the same, denoting the collapse of American politics into a single corporatist enterprise? Or would they be different – the Nation's box stuffed with little vintages hand-produced by impoverished Guatemalan villagers under a fair trade cooperative, the National Review box full of American wines with little flags on the labels? And which would be better?

For \$70 apiece, I was sent two boxes of wine, each containing 14 bottles. Then I invited over my friend Matt Ficke, a software developer who used to be a sommelier and the manager of DC's fanciest cocktail bar. We sat down with his wife, Becks, and my husband, Peter, to discover what we had.

...

It took us three bottles to get to anything that anyone would consider drinking for any reason other than scientific inquiry. This was the Willow Springs California Cabernet

Sauvignon (from National Review). My companions' reviews were more along the lines of "I would totally drink this" than "Let's make a note of the name so we can buy it again."

"This has many of the flavors that you associate with cabernet sauvignon," Matt said carefully.

The next bottle, a Silver Pony Cabernet Sauvignon from the Nation, represented a substantial regression. Matt licked his lips, stuck out his tongue and looked pained. His wife dumped the glass into our spit cup, declaring that it was too sweet. Indeed, when I tasted it, it was unpleasantly reminiscent of communion wine.