

As I sit in a fancy restaurant in Los Angeles I observe a customer settle their bill, then grab their half empty bottle of wine off the table and head for the exit. Other guests nearby and restaurant workers didn't even take notice to what I thought was a bizarre sight.

In the US people have always been accustomed to taking home their leftover food in a "doggie bag," but nowadays, it's common to see people taking home their leftover wine in bags provided for them at their seat or at the exit just like their food.

Michael Philippi, manager to "**The Hobbit**" located in Southern California tells us around 20% of customers take their leftover wine home. While in Japan that may seem like a faux pas to walk out of a restaurant with your half empty bottle of wine, in the US people look at it more logically as, "of course I'm going to take my leftover wine that I paid for."

But even in the US, it was only in the last several years that this became a possibility. In most states it has been against the law to take home already opened bottles of wine to prevent drinking and driving. In recent years however, the laws in over 40 states have been amended to allow restaurant patrons to take their wine home.

For instance New Yorkers have been able to take leftover wine home for the last 3 years already, provided they re-cork the bottle and take it in a clear plastic bag provided by the establishment.

It is said that lobbyists from the wine industry were behind the changes. Stating that customers would be able to enjoy their dinner more knowing they can order as much wine as they want without worrying that it will end up going to waste if they cannot finish it. **Bob Beck**, the representative for the 2 year old start-up **winedoggybag.com** that sells the clear plastic bags offered to customers at restaurants, tells that they sell about 10,000 bags a day to various restaurants.

Though compared to Japan, enforcement of drunk driving may be looser in the US because driving is the main mode of transportation. Still even in the US the crack down on drinking and driving is getting stricter and more prevalent every year. The wine industry is hoping the new laws around the US allowing patrons to take their wine home will mean less drinking at the restaurant, leading to less drinking and driving infringements. They will however be keeping their eyes on the effective, and may have to reevaluate if numbers of accidents go up rather than down.