

## How to Ship Homemade Wine to Competitions

As many of you may have experienced, it can be difficult for the home winemaker to ship wine to a competition. If you can get someone you know to hand deliver it, then that is nice, but not always are you so lucky to be able to do that. So we depend on UPS or FedEx and the like, but NOT the U. S. Postal Service. When you are speaking to a shipping agent, NEVER say the “w-word”. In fact don’t even think it. It might slip out by accident. If it does then typically “they” will refuse to ship your wine or should I say liquid for organoleptic testing. I have to give credit where credit is due, the American Wine Society Home Wine Competition Committee. It is from that committee that I have drawn on to provide the following information.

By Federal statute, we, home winemakers, do NOT make wine. No matter how you feel about that statement, it is good for us when it comes to shipping. As far as our Federal government is concerned wine can only be made by commercial wineries. We all know that what we make sure does look like wine, taste like wine, and feels like wine, so we all think that it is wine. Don’t worry about the first statement of this paragraph it works for us. Here is how: Since it is not wine, but we can drink it, then the Federal government classifies it as food. Yes, they consider it the same as homemade cookies, but in a bottle. You can ship cookies anywhere, right? That means that you can ship that “stuff” that you put in bottles, and NOT lie about what it is.

Here is what has happened to me the last time I shipped wine to a competition. When I presented my wine to be shipped to a competition, I was asked what was in it. I just pointed to the label (see below) and said “That is what it is.” Point and grunt as I often say. When I was asked again, and again, I responded in the same way each time. I NEVER used the “w-word”. In looking at this label it does look officious enough to satisfy most shipping agents. Keep that in mind if you should copy the wording. Make it look good and easy to read, but NOT fancy. Do make it look “official”. Crayoned writing just does not work. As a matter of course, I do put clear shipping tape over ALL of my labels so they don’t come off.

How should we pack our bottles of “Food Samples for Evaluation”? So glad you asked. I reuse wine shippers, which are boxes specifically, made for the shipping of wine. I have received over 100 of these with two bottles each and have never received a broken bottle. I have shipped wine reusing those boxes with the same wonderful result. If you do reuse such a box, then make sure that it is still structurally sound before using it. If you do not have such a box, then think oversized box with packing peanuts and bubble wrap. There are those that believe that a garbage bag is a good idea to contain any spilling, if it should occur. For those of you who use screw cap bottles, you may wish to put a narrow piece of tape (“duct tape” anyone?) up one side of the bottle, across the cap and down the other side of the bottle. This should inhibit the cap from turning in transit. It would also be a good idea to fold over a short length the tape at one end so it will be easy for someone to remove it.

**New York State Home Wine Committee of the American Wine Society**

[www.nys-homewine.info](http://www.nys-homewine.info)

# ***ATTENTION!***

*Food Samples for Evaluation  
No Commercial Value-Not Perishable  
Conforms to IRS and FDA Restrictions  
Not Taxable per 27CFR24.75  
**HANDLE AS GLASS***

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