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Wine Industry Leaders Defend Moderate Consumption at São Paulo Health Symposium

Experts and producers debate scientific evidence and cultural traditions as calls grow for nuanced alcohol guidelines worldwide.

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The global debate over alcohol consumption has intensified in recent years, following statements from international health organizations that there is “no completely safe amount of alcohol for the body.” The World Health Organization’s position, made public

in 2023, sparked reactions across the beverage industry. The wine sector, in particular, has responded with calls for a more nuanced discussion. Industry representatives argue that while the risks of excessive alcohol consumption are clear, wine should be considered within cultural traditions, dietary habits, and ongoing scientific research.

This issue is at the center of the International Symposium on Wine, Health and Lifestyle, taking place today in São Paulo. The event is organized by the Sectoral Chamber of Viticulture, Wine and Derivatives of the State of São Paulo. It brings together doctors, researchers, and health professionals to discuss responsible wine consumption and its potential effects when paired with a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.

Célia Carbonari, president of the Sectoral Chamber, says the goal is to improve the quality of the debate. She notes that wine producers have faced increasing pressure to warn about excessive alcohol use. “When we defend consumption, we defend moderate and conscious consumption,” Carbonari says.

Among the speakers is cardiologist Protásio Lemos da Luz from the Heart Institute at the University of São Paulo. He will present studies on the metabolic effects of red wine. Cardiologist Jairo Monson will address whether all alcoholic beverages have similar impacts on health. Spanish physician Ramon Estruch, known for his research on the Mediterranean diet, will discuss links between moderate wine consumption, cardiovascular prevention, and well-being. The symposium will close with a roundtable moderated by journalist Marianne Piemonte.

The initiative reflects a growing movement within the wine sector to foster dialogue between science, public health, and food culture. Unlike many other alcoholic drinks, wine has long been associated with moderate consumption during meals and traditional dietary patterns such as the Mediterranean diet. Over several decades, studies have found associations between moderate wine intake and cardiovascular health indicators. These benefits are often linked to phenolic compounds in wine that have antioxidant properties.

However, more recent research highlights that even small amounts of alcohol can pose risks for certain groups or health conditions. Experts say that information and moderation are key to navigating this complex topic. They caution against both simplistic demonization and unrestricted promotion of alcohol.

The challenge now is to build a culture of responsible consumption based on scientific evidence, cultural context, and education. As discussions continue about wine’s place in society and its effects on health, participants at today’s symposium aim to keep the conversation open and balanced.