



## From Israel, a wine for Christians

By Alana Semuels, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer  
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What would Jesus drink?

Pini Haroz, an Israeli-born Georgia-based wine importer, thinks the answer is the Grapes of Galilee, which he's pitching to American Christians.



Haroz said the label -- two portraits of Jesus by Los Angeles artist Morgan Weistling above the slogan "Grown Beside the Sea of Galilee, Watered by the Jordan River" -- should make the Merlot, Chardonnay or Cabernet "a nice present for Christmas." He added that he wasn't concerned about bottles being purchased as gag gifts: "I don't believe that with this kind of label, some college students in a bar will party with it."

The wine is being advertised in the December issue of Catholic Digest and other religious publications.

Some denominations might think that the Grapes of Galilee isn't kosher. "Jesus chased people out of the temple for selling products in God's name," said Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research, an arm of the teetotaling Southern Baptist Convention. "He did not put his name on the label to pump up sales."

Beyond that, by marketing wine with Jesus' image, "you're associating Jesus with getting drunk and people don't necessarily want to be doing that," said Mara Einstein, author of "Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age."

It's all about knowing your market.

At Vino Libro in Atlanta, Stephen Satterfield, the shop's food and beverage specialist, said connoisseurs didn't seem to care about the label. The Grapes of Galilee, priced at \$13.99 a bottle, is a good wine, Satterfield said, and "sales have been completely unrelated to religion -- although some people weren't sure if it was a gimmick."

The wine is available at stores in Georgia, New York, New Jersey and on the Internet, and there are plans to expand. Haroz said he was sure he could convert doubters with the quality of a fermented juice from a land where Jesus lived and preached.

"If he ate grapes or made wine," Haroz said, "it must have been from these vines."

After all, Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine.