

# Mormons, Merlot, and the Utah Liquor Monopoly: A Prohibition-Era Tale

In the heart of the American West, nestled amidst the towering peaks of the Wasatch Mountains, lies the state of Utah. A land shaped by a rich and complex history, Utah has long grappled with the issue of alcohol consumption. The state's unique relationship with liquor has its roots in the arrival of Mormon pioneers in the mid-19th century.



## Mormons, Merlot & The Utah Liquor Monopoly : Inspiration thru Fermentation by Spartacus Falanghina

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## The Mormon Influence

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormon Church, has played a profound role in shaping Utah's culture and laws. The Church's doctrine prohibits the consumption of alcohol, and its influence has been a major factor in Utah's restrictive liquor policies.

In 1852, Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, declared martial law in Utah and banned the sale and consumption of alcohol. This prohibition was strictly enforced, and those who violated it faced severe penalties.

## **Prohibition and Bootlegging**

The national Prohibition era, which lasted from 1920 to 1933, further solidified Utah's ban on alcohol. However, prohibition did not end the demand for alcohol. Instead, it created a thriving underground market for bootleggers and speakeasies.

Bootleggers smuggled alcohol into Utah from neighboring states and sold it illegally. Speakeasies, hidden bars that operated in secret, proliferated throughout the state. The demand for alcohol was so high that even some members of the Mormon Church secretly indulged.

## **The Merlot Miracle**

In the 1930s, a peculiar event occurred that would forever change Utah's relationship with alcohol. In 1933, Prohibition was repealed, and Utah began to grapple with the issue of alcohol legalization.

Mormon leaders were reluctant to allow the sale of alcohol in the state. However, they recognized that prohibition had failed and that a more moderate approach was needed.

In 1935, the Utah legislature passed a law that created a state-controlled liquor monopoly. The Utah Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (DABC) was established to regulate the sale and distribution of alcohol.

The DABC's policies were strict. Alcohol could only be sold in state-owned liquor stores, and the selection was limited. However, there was one notable exception: merlot.

Merlot is a red wine that is typically characterized by its soft, fruity flavor. In the 1930s, merlot was a relatively unknown varietal in the United States. However, Mormon leaders believed that it was a less offensive type of wine than others.

As a result, the DABC made merlot the only red wine that could be sold in state liquor stores. This decision had a profound impact on Utah's wine culture. Merlot became the most popular red wine in the state, and it remains so to this day.

## **Alcohol Reform and the Legacy of Prohibition**

In the decades following the creation of the liquor monopoly, Utah's alcohol laws gradually became more relaxed. In 1969, the state allowed private clubs to sell alcohol. In 1987, the sale of beer was legalized in grocery stores.

However, the legacy of prohibition continues to shape Utah's relationship with alcohol. The state's liquor laws are still among the most restrictive in the nation. The DABC maintains a tight grip on the sale and distribution of alcohol, and the selection of available products remains limited.

Despite these restrictions, Utah has a vibrant and diverse alcohol scene. Craft breweries and wineries have flourished in recent years, and there are now a number of excellent restaurants and bars that serve alcohol.

The story of Utah's liquor monopoly is a complex one, intertwined with the state's unique history and culture. From the early days of Mormon settlement to the present day, alcohol has been a source of both conflict and compromise in Utah.

As Utah continues to evolve, its relationship with alcohol will undoubtedly continue to shape its identity. The legacy of prohibition will likely remain a factor for years to come, but the state is also moving towards a more balanced and moderate approach to alcohol consumption.

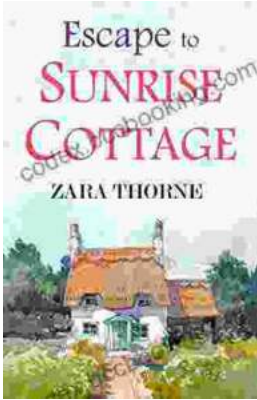


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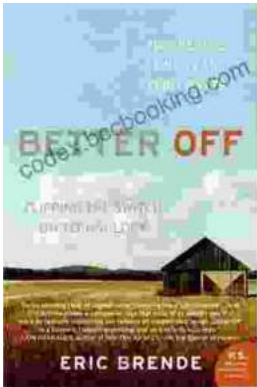
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