

# Duped wine drinkers file US lawsuit

WASHINGTON,, USA A California lawyer has filed a class action lawsuit against French wine producers and a US importer over the sale of millions of bottles of wine falsely passed off as Pinot Noir.



"A class action complaint has been filed seeking to represent all California consumers who purchased falsely labeled wine," said Brian Levine, an attorney with California law firm Kingsley and Kingsley.

The complaint accuses the defendants of "false advertising, unfair business practices, fraud, negligent misrepresentation, (and)... unjust enrichment."

The lawsuit does not specify the amount of damages being sought.

The filing comes after a French court handed down suspended jail terms and hefty fines to 12 people for selling 18 million bottles (135,334 hectoliters) of wine presented as Pinot Noir that was in fact made from far cheaper grape varieties.

Those convicted included executives from wine estates, cooperatives, a broker, wine merchant Ducasse and the conglomerate Sieur d'Arques.

The mislabeled wine was sold in the United States under E & J Gallo's popular "Red Bicyclette" Pinot Noir label, which in 2006 was marketed as having "aromas of dark fruit flavors" and whose palate was said to be like "black cherry and ripe plum."

It is not yet clear whether Gallo purchased the wine at a lower price than the market rate for Pinot Noir.

According to US officials, Constellation Brands, the world's biggest wine group, was also the recipient of some of the 18 million bottles of fake Pinot Noir.

*Source: AFP*

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