

**NEW YORK STATE GROCERS URGE INCLUSION OF WINE
IN GROCERY STORES IN THE FY25 NYS BUDGET**

*Our customers from Buffalo to Montauk overwhelmingly support this
common sense change to bring New York in line with more than 40 other states*

TO: NYS Senate Finance
NYS Assembly Ways & Means
DATE: January 25, 2024
RE: Budget testimony regarding wine in grocery stores

We, the undersigned New York State grocers – serving millions of customers from Buffalo to Montauk – are writing to offer our support for the proposal to allow the sale of wine in NYS grocery stores and to urge you to include this common-sense change in the state’s FY25 budget. Wine in grocery stores is overwhelmingly supported by 76% of New Yorkers¹ across virtually every region, every demographic and every political party. The ability to buy wine in grocery stores is already possible in 40 other states, while New York lags behind. Not only would this law give New York consumers something they universally want, but it would also create significant economic opportunities for the State. Given the fact that our stores have a proud and proven history of selling and promoting New York State agricultural products, the opportunities that this law would afford New York’s wine makers and grape growers is undeniable.

In recognition of the fact that our lawmakers are now beginning to develop budget proposals for the coming year, we want to voice our unequivocal support for the inclusion of wine in grocery stores. We are confident that the revised proposal introduced by Sen. Krueger and Assemblymember Hunter last legislative session will be applauded by citizens across the state as a consumer-friendly and common-sense initiative. In thoughtfully limiting the number of potential new outlets and incentivizing the sale of NYS wines, it generated considerable media that reverberated across the state:

THE NEW YORK TIMES (5/31/23)

...The [SLA] law, enacted in 1934, has long been criticized as outdated and riddled with outlandish vestiges of Prohibition. At first glance, some of the changes that state lawmakers are now considering for modernizing the laws might seem like straightforward, common-sense reforms that would benefit consumers. One would allow New Yorkers to buy wine at grocery stores.

ALBANY TIMES UNION (5/5/23)

The fact that 42 states allow grocery stores to sell wine shows that supermarkets and liquor stores can coexist. ...The Legislature could raise a glass to convenience and modernity by putting bottles on grocery shelves.

BUFFALO NEWS (5/2/23)

Wineries have also shown interest in expanding the number and kind of outlets where they can sell their products. But the liquor store industry is potent in New York and, for obvious reasons, opposes that change even though liquor stores continue to thrive in states where supermarkets can legally sell at least wine. That change seems eventually inevitable in New York.

SYRACUSE POST-STANDARD (6/2/23)

It’s well past time for Albany to enact this common-sense, pro-consumer idea.

¹ Siena College Poll Conducted by the Siena College Research Institute; November 12 - 15, 2023; 803 NYS Registered Voters

AUBURN CITIZEN (6/4/2023)

There's no shortage of logical reasons for passing a state law that would allow grocery stores to sell wine. The state's grape growers and wineries would surely benefit from an expansion in their customer base. Grocery stores would be able to sell a beverage for which there is clear demand. And consumers would have the convenience of buying two products that have a symbiotic relationship — food and wine — in the same location.

The above comments clearly reflect the widespread consumer support for wine in grocery stores and universally acknowledge the economic benefits of such a change. Critically, the public recognizes that the grocery and liquor store industries can co-exist and thrive, as they have in the 40 other states that allow wine sales in grocery stores.

Grocery stores across the nation stepped up during COVID – ensuring that shelves were stocked, that customers could shop safely, that delivery was made more readily available, and ultimately shape-shifted into vaccine centers in further service to our communities - on top of all the enforced mandates by which we operate on a regular basis.

While some fear thoughtful change, we continually adapt to the world around us as did much of society across the last four years. From hybrid scheduling to outdoor restaurant seating to the Governor's permanent approval of restaurant drinks-to-go, we've proven that the sky doesn't fall when we normalize change for the greater good. Wine in grocery stores is a workable, desired change that the overwhelming majority of our customers are requesting. As other states have demonstrated, the sky will not fall – in fact, there is no doubt that New York's economy will thrive.

For more information, please contact Yoswein New York at 212-233-5700. We look forward to working with you to boost New York's agriculture and economy.

Sincerely,

Fairway Market, Gourmet Garage, Hannaford, National Supermarket Association, Price Chopper/Market 32, Price Rite, ShopRite, Stop & Shop, Tops Friendly Markets, Wegmans, Whole Foods Market

