

# the RED CUP

Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction  
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

## Q Why does some alcohol use different measuring systems?

**A.** It certainly does seem confusing trying to figure out serving sizes when you're faced with ounces vs. milliliters, pints, quarts, fifths, handles, and everything in between. There is actually a government regulated standardization system in place in order to protect the consumer. This may not seem possible looking at the array of bottle sizes available, but some of the confusion comes from unfamiliarity with the metric system used on labeling. In the late 70's there was a push for the U.S. to move to the metric system, and despite resistance, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) passed regulations in 1980 to switch alcohol bottle sizes from ounces to milliliters. For example, prior to 1980, the most common alcohol bottle size was called a "fifth" because it was a fifth of a gallon. The BATF decided to stick with the old bottle size but with the new conversion, the amount is no longer an actual fifth of a gallon.

Other hard alcohol conversions: (note that pint and half-pint metric measures don't match the U.S. system)

- Miniature = 50 ml or 1.7 oz. (airline/hotel bottles)
- Half-pint = 200 ml or 6.8 oz.
- Pint = 375 ml or 12.7 oz.
- Handle = 1,750 ml or 59 oz.

Also, volume measures likely came about due to convenience for the maker (think back to glassblowers), retailer, and consumer. After all, it would be difficult to ship or carry around Magnums (1.5 liters) or Jeroboams (3.0 liters).

You may be asking why this is important to know. Knowing standard drink sizes and the number of drinks per container helps you make informed decisions about drinking. Did you know...

- 21 oz. ballpark souvenir cup of light beer = 1.5 standard drinks
- 40 oz. bottle of malt liquor = 4.7 standard drinks
- half-pint of 80-proof spirits = 4.5 standard drinks
- 25 oz. bottle of wine = 5 standard drinks per container



wildfact

**79% of UA students consume only 25% of the alcohol.**

(2012 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2406)



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to [redcup@email.arizona.edu](mailto:redcup@email.arizona.edu)



[www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu)

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