



## High Court Considers Wine Sales

by [Victoria Langley](#)

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The U.S. Supreme Court is considering a case today that will affect whether you can buy your favorite wine over the internet. Florida and 23 other states ban direct sales via phone or the web in a law that dates back to the end of prohibition. Jeb Bush and others who enjoy wine think it may be time to update the rules.

Jerry Miller loves fine wine, so much so that he even has a home wine cellar. Miller buys most of his wine locally, but he wishes he could get hard-to-find bottles from small vineyards over the phone or internet. ***“It’s just from time to time, when you want a special wine that’s not available and it’s a collector-type thing, something you can share down the road with some friends at special times,”*** Miller said. ***“Maybe they can work this problem out some way.”***

Right now 24 states ban direct wine sales over the internet or phone. The laws frustrate collectors and wineries that say it prevents them from reaching out-of-state consumers.

But retailers say the law is just fine the way it is, thank you very much. They’re not keen on increasing competition. There’s also the matter of teen drinking. Florida Retail Federation spokesman Scott Dick says the laws protect just anyone from ordering liquor. ***“You must be 21 years of age or older, and when you start delivering products that have been ordered over the internet, delivered to someone’s home, there’s again the accountability issue,”*** Dick said.

But Governor Jeb Bush thinks Florida should revisit its law, as much to help its own vineyards as to benefit consumers. ***“A vineyard in Florida should be able to ship to Californians if there’s a Californian who wants one of our fine wines and visa versa,”*** Bush said. If the U.S. Supreme Court sides with state’s rights over interstate commerce, however, small wineries could be left with sour grapes.

The National Academy of Science says 10 percent of young people report purchasing alcohol on the internet or through home delivery. The Federal Trade Commission, however, reports states that allow direct shipping report few or no problems with minors. The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to decide the issue sometime next year.