

What Does Wine Taste Like?

Whenever a bellhop asks me if I need help with my bags, I say, no thank you, I can manage. When a box clerk or store checker ask me if I need help out to the car, I say, no thank you, I can manage.

YES, I do believe I can manage these things. I can walk, I can carry, I can lift - why do I need help? Certainly, others in grocery line look like they could use help, and perhaps some day, I will too, but in the meantime, no thank you, I can manage. Why then, was I being helped to my car by a young Latina woman who works at Raley's, a major chain store headquartered in the Sacramento area?

On this day, I had purchased 12 bottles of wine, placed them in store-available six-pack carry containers and presented myself to the store checker for payment, and my 10% discount for buying a minimum of six bottles. She rang me up, gave me the discount, collected my money, and said: you know, these carry containers have been known to break when being carried to the car, and if a bottle should break, we cannot give you a refund. Why don't you let the box clerk help you out, just to be on the safe side. I thought for a minute, this violated my long held principle that I could manage, but then if a bottle - or God forbid, two bottles should break, I would not get a refund. OK, I said, she can help me out to the car.

I led the way. The young Latina girl - was she 17 or as old as 19? - pushed the cart with my newly purchased six pack carry cases of wine was following close behind. As we approached my pickup parked on the far side of the lot, she came up close by my side and said, Mister, what does wine taste like?

Christ, I thought, what DOES wine taste like? Well, it is not sweet, I said. Is it strong, she asked? No, it isn't strong, but it is a taste you have to get used to. Jesus, I thought, what a lame answer. What DOES wine taste like?

I opened the pickup door, she safely deposited the two six pack carry cases onto the seat, and hesitated. I thought perhaps she was expecting a tip for helping me out, but I knew that box clerks were not supposed to be tipped, at least that is the conventional wisdom, or perhaps she was waiting for me to

explain what wine tasted like, so I said, thank you, and she said, have a nice day. All the way home, I asked myself: what in the hell does wine taste like?

The lesson of this story: unless you want to be confronted with unanswerable questions posed by the innocent, just say, no thank you, I can manage.