

Sailing wine on the San Francisco Bay

Contributed by Clark Beek
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Sail Transport Network, by Clark Beek, founder of Wine By Sail

This article appeared on SAIL at SailFeed.com

Editor's note:

Clark currently works in marine electronics and has been an active contributor for SAIL for several years. During a multi-year circumnavigation aboard his 40-foot ketch Condesa Clark survived the Asian tsunami and being run down by a freighter off the coast of South America. Clark cruises his sailboat Condesa in the San Francisco area. - Jan Lundberg

A few months ago Charlie Doane wrote a blog post about sail powered shipping. It may be viable someday soon, but activity is afoot on a smaller scale. I first came in contact with the Sail Transport Network a few years ago, when I started Wine By Sail.

The idea of Wine By Sail, in its first incarnation, was to deliver wine from wineries around the Bay Area by sailboat, rather than by truck. Now Wine By Sail is my charter business, and we transport wine on a much shorter voyage, from the bottles to our mouths. You can read all about the first incarnation in this article in Wines and Vines. In the end it wasn't financially viable, and it wasn't even legal. The Coast Guard takes a dim view of non-cargo rated vessels carrying cargo in the first place, and my boat, being built in England, could never be rated for cargo under the Jones Act. I gave up on transporting wine by sailboat, but I still dream of those little tags hanging off bottles in the wine shops that say "Delivered by sailboat, a better deal for the environment," and of quaffing the cargo as I sail down the Napa River.

Where I failed, many are succeeding, and the Sail Transport Network keeps tabs on all of them. Make some time to read up on various sail-based projects, and see where you might fit in. If there is anything going on in the world of sail-powered shipping, STN knows about it. My favorite small scale operation is Dave Reid's sail-powered organic produce delivery service on Puget Sound, but there are many others.

I was lucky enough to qualify for an STN burgee (pictured) which I fly proudly. Some guy on the dock was really scratching his head trying to figure out which yacht club I belonged to.

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This article also appears on the website of Sail Transport Network.

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Further reading:

CNN-International covers Sail Transport Network - certification is discussed.

STN's membership structure and availability of burgee as shown: