



May 20, 2016

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL

Costco
1718 Boston Post Road
Milford, CT 06460

Costco Headquarters
999 Lake Drive
Issaquah, WA 98027

Re: Deceptive in-store signs featuring inaccurate wine ratings

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to you on behalf of Truth in Advertising, Inc. (“TINA.org”), a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Connecticut dedicated to protecting consumers nationwide from deceptive advertising. A TINA.org investigation has revealed that Costco in Milford, CT deceptively displays signs that promote high wine ratings and other favorable characteristics, while the actual wines being sold in conjunction with the signs are different vintages than the ones that are rated, and therefore either do not have the same rating or do not have a rating at all.

For example, Costco of Milford features a sign for Kirkland Signature Chardonnay that highlights a “recent” rating from 2011 of 84 points from Wine Enthusiast, as well as other favorable characteristics, which is being used to sell a Kirkland Signature Chardonnay from 2014, a vintage that Wine Enthusiast has never rated.



As you must know, the quality of a wine can differ significantly with each vintage and consumers rely on ratings and descriptions from wine critics to help them make informed purchasing decisions. There can be no question that the marketing practice explained above is deceptive and lures consumers into buying a wine that is different from what they believe they are purchasing. For this reason, we are alerting the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection of the use of this deceptive marketing tactic in liquor stores in the state. We urge you to remove all deceptive signs from your store immediately.

Sincerely,

Laura Smith, Esq.
Legal Director
Truth in Advertising, Inc.