

Book Reports

Book reports by Bob Foster

Edited and reprinted with the kind

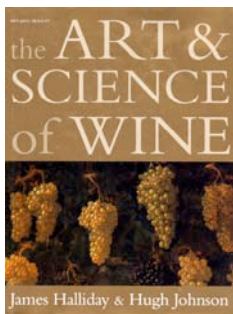
Permission of "California Grapevine"

To find out about California Grapevine, visit www.calgrapevine or write them at Post Office Box 22152, San Diego, CA 92192. An annual subscription is \$35.00

The Art and Science of Wine

James Halliday and Hugh Johnson

Firefly Books, Buffalo, New York; 2007



I still don't think most wine consumers understand how difficult it is to make a top-notch wine. A winemaker must make over a thousand decisions, and every single one of those decisions can render a wine merely mediocre, or worse. The authors, two of the most well-respected in the entire wine world, carefully examine each of the decisions a winemaker must make, and explain both the science and the art that

comes into play at each step. It's a superb work, masterfully done. A first edition of this book came out in 1992, but the world of wine has changed so much since then that, for all practical purposes, this is a new book.

It is divided into three major sections: In the Vineyard, In the Winery and In the Bottle. Each has detailed discussions of the factors a winemaker must consider and the major choices he or she must make. With "In the Vineyard," the authors first discuss the grapevine from a historical perspective, and then present modern attitudes and practices. Terroir, climate, pruning and yields are next. The vineyard discussions end with plague and pestilence, irrigation and mechanization. Again and again the authors present the hard science and then the art of making a decision based on that science.

I particularly liked how "In the Winery" was organized. The authors have grouped the various challenges by the style of wine. Subsections run from light-bodied whites to full-bodied reds and fortified wines and the choices are charted for each. For oak, questions such as the type of oak or the cooperage are charted with and choices such as seasoning, construction and toast level listed. In the winery, the size of the barrel, the use of new or used oak and storage conditions must all be considered. Each of the sections is superbly done and

fascinating to read. It's a simple formula. Take two of the best wine writers of our era, and let them do a thorough analysis of the science and the art that go into every decision for winemaking, from the vineyard to the bottle. The result? One of the best wine books of the year. Bravo!

Very Highly Recommended.

Perfect Pairings; A Master Sommelier's Practical Advice for Partnering Wine with Food

*Evan Goldstein, Recipes by Joyce Goldstein
University of California Press, Berkeley; 2006*



This book has a very interesting approach to a complicated and often ignored topic. The author presents no hard and fast rules but instead offers a wealth of suggestions and insights that allow each wine-lover to make more informed choices. While many books and articles on matching food and wine begin with the food and then suggest wines to go with the various dishes, Evan

Goldstein, only the eighth American to pass the Master Sommelier exam, recognizes that most of us begin with a wine and want to build a menu around it.

So, his book begins with the wine and its characteristics and then explains what types of food it works with and those it will struggle against. There is also a short section on the regions where the grapes are grown for each wine, and another on the choices each grape variety gives a winemaker for the final style of wine. Additional sections include the various flavors found in each variety, and food and wine pairings for each of the various styles of a varietal wine. Some general "Pairing Pointers" for each variety are also given.

Joyce Goldstein, a noted San Francisco Bay area chef, provides several recipes that work well with various styles of the varieties. I particularly liked her chart at the back of each recipe that lists the producers to try with that dish. Wines are sorted into three categories: everyday, premium and splurge.

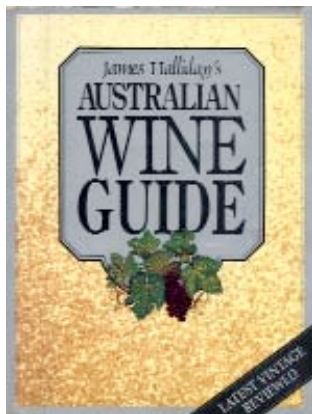
In conclusion, Evan Goldstein presents his "Hall of Fame Wines." It's his list of favorite producers. Almost ten pages long, it covers most growing areas of the world. Finding the favorite wines of a very experienced Master Sommelier provides the reader with a very interesting look at an insider's thinking.

Highly Recommended

Australian Wine Guide

James Halliday

University of California Press, Berkeley; 2006



Let me cut to the chase. If you're a lover of Australian wines this amazing book belongs in your library. It is superb. The author, one of Australia's most well-known and influential wine writers and winemakers, has put together a fabulous work. It begins with a short introduction on the status and history of winemaking down under. The book then moves on to cover each of the growing regions in Australia. For each region there is a short essay on the history and current goings-on. A detailed map follows, with winery locations, the geography of the region, and major roads. Symbols indicate those wineries that have "cellar doors" (public tasting- sales rooms). A side-block gives hard data such as latitude, heat degree-days, annual rainfall and signal viticultural hazards. The only draw-

back is that the figures are in millimeter and degrees Celsius. A small insert-map indicates where in Australia the region is located. Next are short sections on climate, principle grape varieties grown in the region, soil and topography followed by boxed discussions of the styles of wines made from each of the major varieties in the area.

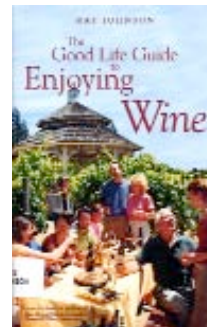
Following all of this material on a general area, are short sections on each of the major producers of that region. In these sections Halliday gives his evaluation of the producer and a brief history. At the end, printed in red is Halliday's evaluation of the "Signature Wine" of that producer. There are numerous color reproductions of the labels and photographs of the owner, or winemaker or even winery dog. The maps are clear, precise and easy to read and the color photographs are detailed, lavish and profuse.

Very Highly Recommended.

The Good Life Guide to Enjoying Wine

Ray Johnson

The Writers' Collective, Cranston, RI; 2006



Let's face it. Many introductory wine books are intimidating. They overwhelm the reader with way too much information. Their mere size emphasizes how much there is to learn and thus reinforces the notion that wine is something difficult to grasp, reserved for special occasions.

Ray Johnson does an admirable job of presenting all the basics in a light, quick style. He gives the readers just enough to understand the basics and points the way for further personal exploration. There are sections about learning what you like, how to buy in a store, serving wine at home, food pairing, and a myriad of other short topics.

It's the kind of gentle overview a wine lover might give a novice friend over dinner.

Highly recommended