

Vino Ventures

Educate | Explore | Experience

Book Review: Passion for Wine

Posted on [April 2, 2018](#) by [Kathy Merchant](#) | [Leave a comment](#)



Winemaker Jean-Charles Boisset and Sommelier Marnie Old have written a fascinating book that is part coffee-table gorgeous, part serious wine education with sophisticated infographics, and part brand promotion for the JCB Collection of wineries.

“All that glitters is not gold” (thank you Shakespeare) in this sparkling tour of French and American wine. It is a waltz across sensory experience amplified by some super-serious sections on growing

grapes and making wine. Though characterized by Boisset and Old as a book meant to quash the intimidation factor for novices, as well as inspire exploration by all levels of wine *afficionados*, in less than 200 pages they have achieved a fairly comprehensive — yet entertaining — coverage of the topic of wine.

There is something in this book for everyone, regardless of how much you already know about wine. Marnie Old says it best when describing the personality of “Passion for Wine”: she’s a little bit *Sesame Street*, he’s a little bit *Sex and the City*.

I have three personal favorite chapters, starting with #1 covering the history of wine in France and the United States.

This chapter is a short story of origin about quality wine. Sure, there is evidence that wine was made before the first recorded history in France around 6000 BC. Greeks and Romans vie for first-place honors here. But almost everything about wine today can trace its origins to France.

The links and parallels between France and the U.S. are interesting and important, explaining much of what consumers experience in the global wine industry today. Jean-Charles Boisset embodies this connection, describing himself as “rooted in Burgundy with the spark of California.” The maps of France (and the rest of Europe) and the U.S. (plus the rest of the New World, mostly in the Southern Hemisphere) are easy to digest. If you avoid delving into history because it’s usually too tedious to pore over all the gory details of politics, war,

religion, nobility, economic crises, crippling vine diseases, industry pioneers, and more — well then, this book's for you in a deft 17 pages (including the beautiful intro photo).

Chapter 5 is a wonderfully clear rendering of the *vitis vinifera* grape varieties that are well known to wine lovers on an international scale: “France’s royal family.” Perhaps with the greatest of ironic twists, these grape varieties are grown almost everywhere in the world. Everyone knows Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, right? Their familiar names appear on labels. But not in France. What?!? You just have to know that Chablis is really Chardonnay, or that red Burgundy is Pinot Noir, and that red Bordeaux is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot (plus partners). Eight of the major varieties, three blending partners, and American Zinfandel, are profiled in this chapter. One of the coolest charts in the entire book, called “The Best of the Rest,” is on page 123.

And finally, the chapter on pairing wine with food with hints for home entertaining is most helpful. Marnie Old provides a straightforward somm’s introduction to glassware, decanters, serving temperature, and cellaring tips. Although a portion of the chapter is described as advanced, I found all of matching principles to be clear and simple, including recommendations for serving wine with vegetables, “wine killer” salad dressing, seafood, and meat/poultry. Bottom line: pair wine to the cooking flavors, not the protein. You could make a fun and successful wine pairing dinner or party if you only read this chapter!

I’m skipping lightly over Chapters 2, 3, and 4, and feeling a bit guilty about it. They are well done, lots of cool graphics, but perhaps try to accomplish too much for this book in conveying technical knowledge in the vast arenas of growing grapes, making wine, tasting wine, assessing wine, understanding styles of wine, and more. All that said, I have to make a special mention of Chapter 4. If you love looking at old photos of cinema’s leading ladies like Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn, then this chapter alone is a compelling reason to buy the book.

Jean-Charles Boisset and his family own 26 wineries: 16 in France, 8 in California, and one each in Canada and England. A dozen of the wineries are profiled in the book, complete with gorgeous photos, including the artful modernization of Buena Vista and Raymond in California, and the traditional preservation of the winery founded by JCB’s father in Burgundy.

“Passion for Wine” is available for purchase online (and shipping to most states) from JCB Collection by clicking [here](#).