

## Recent wine books

8 Aug 2005 by JR

The following are the wine books I consult and rate. See [Amazon.com](#), [Amazon.co.uk](#) and [Finding older books](#) to track down any that may be out of print.

### GENERAL

**[The Oxford Companion to Wine](#)**, massive million-word reference book edited by me and available free online [here](#), and only here. The 3rd edn will be out in sep 06. Although it's not really a translator-friendly book, it has been translated into French, German and Danish.

**[The World Atlas of Wine](#)**, 5th edn by me and Hugh Johnson with unrivalled maps and lots of his matchless prose. Where the wines come from - so important! Arguably the classic of modern wine literature, it has sold more than four million copies in 14 languages.

**[Jancis Robinson's Wine Course](#)** - the book of my BBC tv series (now available on [dvd](#)) was considerably updated in 2003 and is a good all-round introduction with lots of nice illos.

**[Vines, Grapes & Wines](#)** by me, terribly dated (written in 1984/5) but rather beautiful and still useful guide to the grape varieties of the world. I will do an updated version when I find the time between *Companion* and *Atlas* updates, I promise.

**[Wine Report](#)** annual edited by Tom Stevenson is a useful assembly of annual reports on what has been going on in every wine region, with specific recommendations.

### GEOGRAPHICAL WINE BOOKS

**[The New France](#)** by Andrew Jefford, one of the best wine books period, a love letter to 21st century French wine somehow fitted into a rather unnecessary formula by publishers Mitchell Beazley to follow on from other books on Spain and a pretty unsatisfactory one on Italy.

**[Burgundy](#)** by Anthony Hanson MW - now out of date (it really should be a website) but this is a sound and thorough dig into some of the best dirt in the world.

**[Bordeaux](#)** by Robert M Parker Jr - masses of really useful solid, up to date information, plus of course all those tasting notes and ratings.

**[The Wines of the Northern Rhône](#)** by John Livingstone-Learmonth is expected to be a fine addition to the canon of modern wine literature when it comes out in the US this fall.

**[Wines of the Rhône Valley](#)** by Robert M Parker Jr came out in 1997 but is the most up to date mine of information on the southern Rhône, rivalled by Remington Norman MW's **[Rhône Renaissance](#)**.

**[A Wine and Food Guide to the Loire](#)** by Jacqueline Friedrich is now a little bit dated but is a sorely-needed book written by a real enthusiast with American diligence.

**[World Encyclopedia of Champagne and Sparkling Wine](#)** by Tom Stevenson. This should really have been limited to champagne as that is what the author (and most readers) care about.

**[Vino Italiano](#)** by Joseph Bastianich and David Lynch and Nicolas Belfrage's rather confusingly organised twins **[Barolo to Valpolicella](#)** and **[Brunello to Zibibbo](#)** are the best current resources on Italy. Gambero Rosso's annual **[Italian Wines](#)** is also useful for contact details, spellings and a glimpse at Italy's best producers' ranges.

**[The New Spain](#)** by John Radford is a solid reference on modern Spain, very slightly too 'official' but already revised. I

also consult the annual **Guía Peñín** for much the same reasons as I look up Italian Wines above.

Richard Mayson has Portugal very serviceably tied up with **The Wines and Vineyards of Portugal** (2003) and **Port and the Douro** (2004).

**The Wines of Germany** by Stephen Brook and the **Gault Millau Guide to German Wine** by Joel Payne and Armin Diel are the best resources to date on the modern German wine scene.

Hundreds of books have been written about California wine but, perhaps because the situation there is so fluid, it is hard to recommend one solid reference book on today's wineries which are probably best researched online. But for the general picture **Matt Kramer's New California Wine: Making Sense of Napa Valley, Sonoma, Central Coast, and Beyond** which came out in 2004 is a highly-rated update of his **Making Sense of California Wine**, now a bit dated but solid on terroir observations.

**Wines of the Pacific Northwest** by Lisa Shara Hall works well for Oregon and Washington.

The now-you-see-it problem also afflicts South American wine publishing. There have been a few attempts to nail it but apart from annual local guides in Chile, nothing stands out.

The same constant flux 'problem' afflicts Australia but it has had a couple of centuries to evolve its own wine literature, and in English too. James Halliday is the doyen. See his annual paperback **James Halliday's Wine Companion**, although his hardbacked **Australian Wine Guide** is better at background.

The reason no-one has come up with a great big book on South African wine is that the annual **John Platter's South African Wine Guide** is so good and has so much in it.

He and his hardworking wife are no longer involved day-to-day with this guide but took time to travel round Africa to provide us with **Africa Uncorked**, which truly bridges the gap between this, geographical, section and the next.

## GOOD READS

**The Accidental Connoisseur** by Lawrence Osborne. Distinctly, indeed wilfully, idiosyncratic tour of what makes wine give pleasure and some of the characters involved. See [Good reads about wine](#).

**Adventures on the Wine Route** by Kermit Lynch published initially in the US in the 1980s or very early 1990s and then in the UK, by Dorling Kindersley, I think. This set the gold standard for wine memoirs. Very colourful, deeply opinionated account of basically those (mainly French) wine producers of whom the Wine Sage of Berkeley approves. Some splendid lambasting of Bordeaux and the Bordelais. Slightly rosy-hued view of Domaine Tempier of Bandol where Lynch now spends much of each year. Moody black-and-white photographs too.

**On Wine** by Gerald Asher published in the US about 20 years ago. Gourmet's longstanding Anglo-American wine writer writes urbane, deeply researched despatches for that culinary magazine. There have now been two volumes of his collected and edited works. I lost my heart to the first, largely for the atmospheric description of escaping Paris in August for the hills of Beaujolais. A quaint choice of escape by today's blinkered standards.

**Bacchus and Me** by Jay McInerney. Published in the US by Jay's usual publishers in 2001. Racy autobiographical account of the American novelist's conversion from Bright Lights, Big City to Brix Levels, Big Chardonnay. So heartening to know that nosing can be an alluring substitute for snorting.

**A Pike in the Basement** by Simon Loftus published in the 1980s in the UK, by Ebury Press I think. As I have written before on this site, Simon Loftus's detour from literary wine merchant to running the entire family brewing business of Adnams of Southwold is our loss. It's worth getting hold of any of his books, whether these reminiscences, *Anatomy of the Wine Trade* (Sidgwick & Jackson, early 1980s) or *Puligny Montrachet* (Ebury Press, late 1980s).

## HISTORY

**The Story of Wine** by Hugh Johnson - an elegant sweep through the history of wine.

**A History of Wine in America.** Thomas Pinney has written two excellent volumes on the history of American Wine.