Learn how to taste from Len

1 Sep 2007 by JR

A little gem of a book, *Len Evans – How to taste wine*, has just been published in Australia and can be ordered from anywhere in the world.

Evans had just finished work on this practical guide and collection of reminiscences from his 40 years as a wine judge, many of them as Australia's pre-eminent exponent of the noble beverage, when he died suddenly just over a year ago (see this account). Anyone who knew him, or one of the many hundreds of thousands who was dazzled and/or berated by him from stage, lectern or head table, will enjoy this unadulterated dose of his expertise, experience and iconoclasm. He wrote as he spoke, although we are now alas deprived of his immaculate comic timing.

This thoroughly attractive book has been put together with the help of his friends James Halliday and Hugh Johnson and some clever design, including a wonderfully accurate line drawing of his profile by the artist Fred Williams who designed The Rothbury Estate labels during Len's tenure and who, according to Len's daughter Sally, "was also Welsh and looked very similar to Dad funnily enough!"

Of its 112 pages, some of my favourites describe dinners: one in Bordeaux to honour André Tchelistcheff, another in Sydney to honour Michael Broadbent at which the late Andrew Ousback, an Evans protégée, pretended to have dropped the **Rüdesheimer Apostelwein 1727**, his 75th birthday celebration in the Hunter Valley in 2005 at which no fewer than 14 1929s were served, including two first growths and a magnum of **Romanée Conti 1929**(!), and his casual reference to drinking **Lafite 1865** twice, once in bottle (in 1982) and once in double magnum if you please (in 2002).

This is his recipe for successful tasting: "read as much as possible, go to as many tastings as you are able, attend dinners, listen to advice, try to be in the company of those who can impart wine wisdom and knowledge." Of those five practices, I only ever saw him indulge in two.

Len Evans – How to taste wine, published by Barbara Beckett Publishing of Sydney, has a retail price of Aus$19.95 within Australia but can be ordered, quantity discounts applying, from:

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Email to enquire about postage and packing costs to destinations outside Australia.