2012 wine books - manuals, annuals and a novel

23 Dec 2012 by Jancis Robinson

This, complete with images from Amazon, is Paul O'Doherty's final instalment of reviews of the wine books published in 2012. For the others, see our guide to 2012 wine book reviews.

View from the Vineyard
A Practical Guild to Sustainable Winegrape Growing
Clifford P Ohmart
Wine Appreciation Guild
£22/$34.95

Setting out the manifesto for sustainability in the vineyard, Ohmart, an entomologist (a student of insects), begins by defining sustainable winegrowing from the evolution of organic farming through to the emergence of sustainable agriculture and the development of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Building his argument, he focuses on sustainable winegrowing from different perspectives and poses a number of questions from how natural is farming to how are organic and sustainable farming related? There is also a brief synopsis of biodynamic farming involving the Austrian philosopher and social reformer Rudolf Steiner's role, an emphasis on the importance of science in growing grapes in the United States, the holistic view of practising sustainable winegrowing and ecosystem management, among many other topics. In essence, this is a thought-provoking analysis from someone who knows his agenda.

Concepts in Wine Chemistry
Third Edition
Yair Margalit
Wine Appreciation Guild
£60/$97

Covering all aspects of wine chemistry, Israeli vineyard owner and physical chemist Yair Margalit is now into his third edition on concepts relating to wine chemistry. Covering such topics as must and wine compounds, the fermentation process, phenolics, aroma and flavour, oxidation and ageing, the use of oak, sulphur dioxide, cellaring, wine faults and wine and health among other topics, this is a specialised chemistry book for professionals or students really interested in what is going on in the calculations and observations that, for the most part, go over the average reader's head. That said, there is still lots for the casual reader to enjoy if they put their mind to it.

Cheers!
Wine Cellar Design
Artpower
€44/$70

Wine architecture obviously has its place too on the wine bookshelf. And, while the title indicates that this is about wine cellar design, and there are lots and lots of photographs of the cellars from hell to the truly spectacular, there are also plenty of shots to admire from stainless steel vats to what could easily double as futuristic wine bars more akin to an espresso commercial set in the 22nd century. Essential eye-candy for anyone planning a cellar and those with a compulsion to turn pages.

My Top Wines for 2013
Delicious Good Value Wines to Try Tonight
Oz Clarke
Pavilion
£7.99/$13

Oz Clarke's annual edition has a few changes this year. It's no longer called *250 Best Wines*, it's slightly taller but not as wide, and costs £1/$1.60 more. Other than that, Clarke provides his usual entertaining take on his best wines of the year. Split into best 50 whites, best 50 reds, 50 for £6 to £12 ($9.50 to $19), those around £6 ($9.50), those cheap and cheerful, rosé wines, keeping it light (12% alcohol or less), fizz, fortified wines and sweeties, there are also the traditional

sections on storing, serving and tasting wine, wine style guide, buying wine for the long term, retailers' directory and where to source the wines around Britain and Ireland. This is uncomplicated, no-nonsense stuff that's easy to read and handy to carry. As a postscript, I should add that as I was reading this book I happened to be tasting a glass of Pieropan Soave 2011. Rather clumsily I spilt some as I was turning the page. Where did my glass of Pieropan fall? Over its entry on page 28 as one of the Best 50 whites. Spooky or what?!

Pocket Wine Book 2013
Oz Clarke
Pavilion
£11.99/$19

Now in its 21st year, Clarke's book starts out with his introduction and views on current trends, mentions some of his favourite wines, what to make of modern wine styles, matching food and wine, matching wine and food, and how to make the most of wine before going on to give his overview on wine-producing countries, slightly updated on previous years. Finally, he offers his A-to-Z of wines, producers, grape varieties and wine regions and a glossary of wine terms and who owns what. This is familiar fare that might fit in your pocket, particularly as this vintage will cost you £2 ($3.20) more than the 2011 version. Who says there is a recession?

Broke The Grape's Joy
Patrick Hilyer
Feedaread.com
£6/$9.60

Firstly, this is a novel and, according to part of the blurb, it's about an 'English widow, Jean Valeix, the owner of a fabulous vineyard in the old French wine village of St-Émilion. But her cherished winery is struggling to sell its produce. A handful of people - among them a charming middle-aged Scotsman, a jaw-droppingly beautiful girl and a talented autistic boy - will change her life completely. But not all her visitors are who they claim to be'. That's about as much as you need to know about it, except that the title is taken from a Dylan Thomas poem. Other than that, this is a clear example of how difficult it is to write wine fiction.