

Saying that “Pinot noir shows its most delicious side when aging,” a proposition with which I often agree, Lewin ends up with heavy emphasis on felicitous ageability as an *indicator* of wine’s hedonic worth, or at least of pinot noir’s hedonic worth. At one point he cites the auction prices of Domaine de la Romanée Conti as evidence that the market thinks Burgundies age more felicitously than any Bordeaux, and he stops just shy of embracing the notion that wines built to age do not show well when young. Surely, however, the stratospheric prices commanded by DRC wines (*vis-à-vis* those asked for Grand Cru Bordeaux) are primarily a function of reputation vs. minuscule supply. There is also the problem that “essence” arguments about defining properties of any region’s wine, or wine in any given region from a single grape, that are based almost exclusively on the properties of its rarest and most expensive exemplars, risk confusing a few majestic trees for the forest.

Occasionally good books seem needlessly flawed by shortcomings associated with editing, design and/or production. Throughout *In Search . . .* photographs display a mauve tint, and some are washed out, e.g., p. 82. Important topical transitions are sometimes made without benefit of appropriate subheads; e.g., the shift made on p. 313 from a discussion of Australia to information about South Africa. Often text is neither centered nor aligned in the cells of tables; in the table on p. 132 Rheinhessen is unnecessarily truncated to “Rheinness—”. The table on p. 123 would have been clearer if “relative distance to Beaune” had not been expressed in miles; what is apparently meant here is the rough equivalent in miles of differences in latitude, but I had to puzzle this out.

Overall, this is a very serious and interesting book on a matter of growing interest, especially as pinot noir looks more and more like a major international variety.

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JANCIS ROBINSON, JULIA HARDING and JOSÉ VOUILLAMOZ: *Wine Grapes: A Complete Guide to 1,368 Vine Varieties, including their Origins and Flavours*. Ecco (Harper Collins), New York, October 2012, xxxvii + 1242 pp., ISBN 978-0062206367 (hardback), US\$175.

Jancis Robinson MW has done it again! In addition to being one of the world’s best known wine writers and broadcasters, including being the wine correspondent for the UK’s *Financial Times* since 1989, Jancis has raised the bar once more for global wine reference books. She published *The Oxford Companion to Wine* in 1994 and shepherded it through two further editions in 1999 and 2006. Then in 2007 she

published with Hugh Johnson the 6th edition of *The World Atlas of Wine*, which tells us *where* winegrapes are grown. And now, after four years of arduous research, she has published—with co-authors Julia Harding MW and José Vouillamoz—the definitive book on *which* winegrape varieties are grown around the world. It replaces Jancis Robinson's much more modest but still popular 1986 consumer guide to grape varieties entitled *Vines, Grapes and Wine*.

This is an extraordinary addition to the literature on varieties in several dimensions: size (1,280 pages and 7lbs/3kgs!), beauty (it includes full-page color reproductions of 80 of the 500 paintings produced for the 7-volume, 3,200 page book, *Ampélographie*, by Pierre Viala and Vitor Vermorel published between 1901 and 1910), accessibility (because it's senior writer is an exceptional journalist), originality (e.g., their vine family of 14 pedigree diagrams and their ancestors), and respect for the scientific literature (a 20-page bibliography up to mid-2011). The authors could have made the book even longer, as there are perhaps 10,000 grape varieties, but they confined themselves to those grape varieties they could find to be still used in making wine in commercial quantities. A preview of the volume is available at www.winegrapes.org

The timing of this book is no accident: in recent years DNA profiling has added hugely to traditional ampelography (which has been based on physical characteristics of the vine's appearance). Scientific publications from that vine profiling began in South Australia in 1993 and in California at UC Davis in 1997, and have surged ahead in the fifteen years since then. When one parent is missing, it is still possible for DNA profiling to identify parent-offspring relationships. And even when both parents are unknown, a probabilistic approach can be used to detect siblings, grandparents or grandchildren. The latter has been done for Syrah, for example: its parents were discovered barely a decade ago to be Mondeuse Blanche and Dureza, its great grandparent is very likely Pinot (according to Vouillamoz and Grando 2006), and it is either a grandchild or a half-sibling of both Mondeuse Noire and Viognier.

In addition to it being much easier to prepare such a book now that DNA profiling technology is available, the book is timely also because of the growing demand for this stock of knowledge. One reason has to do with globalization. Numerous countries are looking to expand their wine exports, and one way to successfully compete in a crowded marketplace is to differentiate one's product via varietal choice. Consumers, too are always looking for new types of wines, and more so as homogenization of product ranges proceeds with multinationalization of both wineries and wine retailers. A second reason for this increased demand for information on what grape varieties are growing where relates to the perceived need to adapt to climate change. Especially in the New World, where regulations do not restrict varietal choice, winegrowers are continually on the lookout for attractive varieties that do well in climates similar to what they expect theirs to become in the decades ahead. Thirdly, the biotechnology revolution is providing breeders with new opportunities, which is increasing the interest in exploring traits of

little-known varieties. And fourth, the book is able to help those seeking to preserve rare indigenous varieties, especially where only old vines survive.

Some varieties are found to be not as rare as previously believed, however. For example, Zinfandel is genetically identical not only to Pimitivo (in Puglia) but also Tribidrag (in Croatia). Also identical are the two ‘varieties’ in the Liguria region, near Genoa, of Pigato and Vermentino – which are also genetically identical to Favorita (in Piedmont) and Rolle (in southern France).

The 1,368 ‘prime’ varieties currently believed to be grown commercially are listed at the front of the book according to their country of origin. Italy has the most (377), followed by France (204) and Spain (84), and then four other countries contribute just under 80 varieties each (Greece, Portugal, Germany, and the United States). Most of the rest are from Southeastern Europe and the countries surrounding the Black and Caspian seas. There are many more varieties mentioned apart from these prime ones, carefully listed in the entry of each prime variety as a synonym. Also shown in each prime variety entry are the varieties commonly mistaken for that prime one. Some readers might be surprised to see that Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc are not listed as prime varieties. This is because they are mutations of the single variety Pinot, rather than distinct varieties: they can’t be distinguished by standard DNA profiling, only by their skin color.

There is a very helpful Introduction that provides a basic guide for non-scientists to the vine family, mutations and clones, vine breeding to produce crosses or hybrids, pests and diseases and, most importantly, DNA profiling. A brief history of the gradual geographic spread of viticulture over the past ten-plus millennia also is provided.

José Vouillamoz complements the other two co-authors of this book in that he is a botanist and grape geneticist who trained in grape DNA profiling and parentage analyses in Carole Meredith’s lab at the University of California in Davis. He then worked in Trentino, Italy with Stella Grando and since 2004 has been an independent researcher at Switzerland’s University of Neuchâtel. His achievements include the parentage of Sangiovese, the family tree of Nebbiolo, and the expanded genealogy of Syrah and its relationship to Pinot. Together with archaeologist Patrick McGovern of the University of Pennsylvania and colleagues from Georgia, Armenia and Turkey, he was the first to establish the DNA profiles of grape varieties from the Near East. He thus brings great scientific depth to this venture.

Thus this book is likely to be, for the foreseeable future, the ultimate guide to understanding the grape vines that contribute so much to our enjoyment of wine. Further DNA profiling undoubtedly will add to our knowledge stock over time, but for non-specialists there is more than could ever be hoped for in this single volume.

Reference

Vouillamoz, J.F. and M.S. GRANDO (2006), 'Genealogy of Wine Grape Cultivars: Pinot is related to Syrah', *Heredity* 97(2): 102–10.

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ROBIN VON HOLDT: *Top 100 South African Wines and Wine Lists, 2012/2013*. Wine Appreciation Guild: San Francisco, 2012, 288 pp., ISBN 978-0620529907, \$24.95.

This book has great aspirations: its purpose, according to Robin von Holdt in the Foreword, is to “de-myth the bunk”, or in other words to replace “the confetti of awards handed out in wine competitions” and the “jargon and small print”; with the opinions of “a panel of the world’s greatest tasters” adept at “professional judging”. Can the book live up to these expectations? Their proof that it can is that “the winning wines are largely sold out!”

Procedurally, it works as follows: there are two judging panels, with wine tasted in categories (whites, reds, etc.), and the whole process is accomplished over five days. There are three judges in each panel with an overall Chair (Tim Atkin MW from the UK). Of the seven judges, three are from the UK, two from South Africa (one a wine maker who was not allowed to judge his own wine) and one each from Sweden and Italy. The tasting protocols include unsighted tasting; the temperature at which the wine is served (red, fortified and port at approximately 19 °C; white, rosé and dessert wines at approximately 13 °C; sparkling wines at approximately 7 °C); tasted both decanted (12 hours red/2 hours white) and from the bottle (15 minutes), with judges made aware of the duplicate wines; judges cannot discuss the wines during tasting; and top scoring wines are tasted up to three times. The purpose of the whole process is to ensure that international best practice is followed, and an audit and good governance report is publicly available.

Wines are entered into the competition, so it is entirely possible that the selection does not actually represent South Africa’s top 100 wines. A total of 366 wines were tasted (down from 390 last year), which represents only a small proportion of the 5000 odd wines available in the retail market in South Africa. Something like a quarter of the red wines entered made the cut into the top 100 (51 of the 100), a third of the white wines, fewer than a fifth of the *Méthode Cap Classique*, three of the four natural sweet wines and seven of the nine port style wines. The wines are listed alphabetically in the book (i.e. they are not ranked). A quick look at the selection reveals that some of my perennial favorites (Beaumont, Kanonkop, Meerlust,