

bottom of the barrel; why barrels are round; and why barrels taper from the middle outward. So barrels were the preferred means of packaging because they were secure, mobile, adaptable, and cheap and easy to make—the process of making them having hardly changed in centuries. Of course, when made of the right wood they imparted flavors to fine wines and whisky, whiskey and bourbon.

Chapters 2–5 then take the reader through the history of barrels, from the age of the Celts, who started out with amphorae to transport olives and wine and then slowly developed the prototypes of the barrels that were to become so ubiquitous in later times. The Celts passed the baton to the Romans, who gave us the early association between barrels and wine. By the Middle Ages, barrels had become commonplace in the ancient wine-growing regions such as Bordeaux, where there was a desperate need for an efficient means of transporting wine to markets near and far (especially London). By this time, cooperage had become a recognized trade, one of only about 40 designated crafts in Britain and Europe.

Chapter 6 traces the parallels between boats and barrels, and their making, maintenance, and functions, in more detail, and chapter 7 provides more detail about the changing organization of coopers: from guilds to cooperages. Chapter 8 then turns to the modern barrels: the near monopoly of oak wood for aging wines and spirits, with French oak (*Quercus rober*) favored for wine and American oak (*Quercus alba*) largely used for aging whiskey and bourbon in the United States; the geography of the production of oak trees; how these barrels are crafted (chapter 9); and how aging in oak actually works (chapter 10). Of particular interest is the role played by oxygen in softening the wine; the types of flavors that the wood imparts to the wine, both naturally and through the toasting of the wood; and the different designs and styles of the modern barrel. Some of these issues are then revisited in more detail in chapters 11–14.

This is an accessible, interesting, and stimulating book that tells a compelling story about the origins of one of the most important (and expensive) parts of the modern making of fine wines.

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MARK E. RICARDO: *Simply Burgundy: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Wines of Burgundy*. Mark E. Ricardo Book, 2014, 56 pp., ISBN 978-0990513704 (paperback), \$12.99.

Burgundy is the most *terroir*-oriented region in France if not in the whole world. The focus is on the area of origin, as opposed to Bordeaux, where classifications are producer driven and awarded to individual chateaux. A specific vineyard (*climat*

or *lieu-dit*) will bear a given classification, regardless of the wine's producer. The main levels in the Burgundy classifications, in descending order of quality, are as follows:

- *Grand cru* wines are produced from a small number of *grand cru* vineyards in the Côte d'Or and make up 2% of the production at 35 hectoliters per hectare. There are 33 *grand cru* vineyards in Burgundy.
- *Premier cru* wines are produced from specific vineyards that are considered to be of high quality, but slightly lower than *grand cru*. They make up 12% of production at 45 hectoliters per hectare.
- Village appellation wines are produced from vineyard sites within the boundaries of 1 of 42 villages. Village wines make up 36% of production at 50 hectoliters per hectare.
- Regional appellation wines are wines that are allowed to be produced over the entire region or over an area significantly larger than that of an individual village. These appellations can be divided into four groups: The new Coteaux Bourguignons appellation covers wines made throughout the greater Bourgogne region, from the Chablis region in the north to and including the Beaujolais region in the south. Bourgogne is the standard appellation for wines made anywhere throughout the region excluding Chablis and Beaujolais; these wines may be produced at 55 hectoliters per hectare. Subregional appellations cover a part of Burgundy larger than a village; examples are Hautes-Côtes de Beaune and Mâcon-Villages. -Wines of specific styles or other grape varieties include white Bourgogne Aligoté (which is made with the Aligoté grape), red Bourgogne Passe-Tout-Grains (which can contain up to two-thirds Gamay), and sparkling Crémant de Bourgogne.

Simply Burgundy: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Wines of Burgundy by Mark E. Ricardo, a practicing attorney, a registered investment advisor, and the founder and president of Trellis Fine Wine Investments, focuses on exactly that—the classification of Burgundy. With 45 pages plus three appendices, it is about the same number of pages as the Burgundy chapter in Karen MacNeil's popular *Wine Bible*. I would call *Simply Burgundy* a booklet.

Although the *Wine Bible* provides a good introduction to Burgundy, *Simply Burgundy: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Wines of Burgundy* is not an introduction to Burgundy, but an introduction to the classification of Burgundy. Furthermore, it does not go deeply into the ins and outs of the Burgundy classification but stays with the essentials, leaving aside details and aspects of lesser importance of the classification.

The structure of the booklet is as follows: After 1 page on "Regions and Grape Varietals," the author explains in 7 pages the concept of the Burgundy classification. This is followed by reviews of the classification region by region: Chablis (3 pages), Côte d'Or (23 pages), Côte Chalonnaise (2 pages), Mâconais (3 pages), and

Beaujolais (3 pages). Yes, the booklet includes Chablis and even Beaujolais, which in many books about Burgundy are excluded.

An essential part of the Burgundy classification is the system of *climats*, which I would have liked to be more developed by the author. *Climat* is a term for a specific vineyard site of a few hectares. The system of *climats* in Burgundy was granted World Heritage Status by UNESCO last year. Although the author never uses the word *climat*, he refers to the *climats* with *grand cru* and *premier cru* status but leaves all the other *climats* aside (village *climat*). You can find the latter regularly on Burgundy labels, more in Burgundy's export than domestic market. Interestingly, the new German wine classification system, which is modeled after the Burgundy classification system, does not allow winemakers to indicate *climats* on labels that have neither *grand cru* nor *premier cru* status.

There are practically no numbers in the booklet. One does not find anything about the size of the various regions, subregions, and vineyards or yield restrictions at the various levels of the classification, to name a few areas, where numbers would have been helpful to understand Burgundy.

At the lowest level of the classification, the regional level, the booklet is silent on most categories. That may have been motivated by the thought that the targeted readers of the booklet would mainly be interested in the upper levels of the classification.

Looking beyond the classification, the Burgundy lovers agree that although the classification is important to ascertain the quality of a wine before opening a bottle, equally important, if not more important, is who produced the wine (i.e., the winemaker). The famous Clos Vougeot, for example, is owned by about 80 different vigneron, and they all put exactly the same text on the label of their wine bottles, while the quality of Clos Vougeot (and price) varies widely among the range of producers.

The author touched on this issue by adding a list of top producers for each region. The effort is commendable, but I would have appreciated some background information on the producers, such as annual production, *négociant* (that buys the grapes) and/or domain (that grows its own grapes), and price range.

Continuing to look beyond the classification, there is, of course, nothing in *Simply Burgundy: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Wines of Burgundy* on the history of Burgundy, nor is there anything on the structure of the industry.

The origins of Burgundy's classification can be found in the work of the Cistercians who were able to delineate plots of land that produced wine of distinct character. The Roman Catholic Church had an important influence on the Burgundy classification. As the power of the church decreased, vineyards were sold to the bourgeoisie. The Napoleonic inheritance laws resulted in the continued subdivision of many vineyards so that some winemakers hold only a row or two of vines.

In terms of the structure of the industry, the role of *négociants*, who do not own vineyards, is not referred to at all. *Négociants* play a vital role in the Bourgogne. *Négociants* sell wines at all quality levels, including *grand cru*.

To sum up, this is a very small book (a booklet) with the objective of providing “a practical guide to understanding the wines of Burgundy.” The author is concentrating on one aspect—the classification of the wines of Burgundy—and leaves many other aspects that are equally important to “understanding the wines of Burgundy” aside. On the aspect he covers (i.e., the classification), he does not explore the ins and outs of it but focuses on the essentials.

I like the booklet very much as a reference. For the next edition, I would love to see more maps in the booklet. In the current one, there is only an overall map of the Burgundy region with its five subregions.

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MAXIMILLIAN POTTER: *Shadows in the Vineyard: The True Story of the Plot to Poison the World's Greatest Wine*, Twelve, New York, 2015, 304 pp., ISBN: 978-1455516094 (paperback), \$16.00.

I paused after the first four pages. It just seemed a bit too artsy for a real-life crime story. For example, the following sentence did not set the hard-boiled tone I was expecting: “At moments like this, surrounded by the sublime splendor of the vineyards before harvest, the Grand Monsieur sometimes thought of the French masters – Pissarro, Renoir, Monet” (p. 2). However, as I pressed on, I realized that this was a different kind of read and one to which I would eventually take.

Journalist Maximillian Potter updated and greatly expanded his May 2011 *Vanity Fair* article, “The Assassin in the Vineyard,” (<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2011/05/vineyard-poisoning-201105>) into this book, which first appeared 3 years later. Unconstrained by word count, Potter was able to complete the story of a pathetic extortion attempt in January 2010 aimed at the owners of two extraordinary vineyards in Burgundy. He does so by interleaving the details of the crime with about a thousand years of history of the more famous vineyard, Romanée-Conti. What happened at the second, Musigny, owned by Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé, merits only a couple of pages.

The protagonist is Aubert de Villaine, the Grand Monsieur, *co-gérant* of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (DRC), with a member of the Leroy family serving as the other