

Despite the depth of the topic, the book is appropriate for the uninitiated as well as the expert. Waldin's descriptions are in sufficient detail in layperson's terms, while still offering direction, advice, and perspective for the experienced practitioner. It is an enjoyable read for both supporters and skeptics of biodynamic wine, and for any wine enthusiast desiring to know about a trend that is showing prominence in the world of wine.

Kenneth A. Fox
University of Saskatchewan
fox@edwards.usask.ca
doi:10.1017/jwe.2020.24

ROB DeSALLE and IAN TATTERSALL: *A Natural History of Beer*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2019, 256 pp., ISBN: 978-0300233674 (hardcover), \$28.

It is now possible to fill an entire bookshelf with excellent volumes covering the various topics related to beer and brewing. If one considers well-written and accessible books about all forms of alcoholic beverages, then it would be possible to fill an entire home library. *A Natural History of Beer*, by Rob DeSalle and Ian Tattersall, strikes a fascinating balance as a book about everyone's favorite frothy beverage. On the one hand, it digs deeply into many of the scientific, cultural, and economic aspects of beer, including chemistry, physiology, and even psychology. For such a relatively slim volume (256 pages), the research that went into writing it, as reflected by the breadth and depth of the bibliography, is stunning. On the other hand, this book is arguably the perfect starting point for anyone interested in learning and reading more about beer in order to become a more informed drinker, brewer, or shopper.

After finishing the introduction and opening chapter, the book can be read in any order. Each chapter is a fairly self-contained treatise on a different topic, and the topics vary widely from one another. As would be true of any reader, I found myself drawn to some topics more than others.

But each chapter, regardless of my interest in the subject beforehand, opened my eyes to facets of beer that I had never considered and knew little to nothing about. For example, as a Californian living in perpetual fear of the next drought, I was drawn to the chapter on water. There I learned about the concept of specific gravity, which I had heard of but thought it to be related to space travel, and how it is used to assess the alcohol content of beers. As another example, I was excited to read the chapter on hops, because increasingly I find that the pourers at my favorite bars and breweries tell me all about the hops in the beers I am about to drink, using names that mean little to nothing to me. This chapter

taught me two things that I will be repeating at social gatherings for the foreseeable future. For one, in olden times, it was believed that hops were associated with the phenomenon known as “man boobs,” which today we generally attribute to the calories found in beer. For another, the closest relative to *humulus lupulus*, the vine that produces hops as we used them for beer brewing, is cannabis! So for anyone who has been guilty of confusing a brewery with a dispensary based on graphics in the signage, know that your keen eyes identified two close horticultural cousins.

The topics in the book also vary in their accessibility. For example, most readers will take readily to the stories of the rise, fall, and rise again of both traditional public houses and craft breweries. Perhaps my favorite chapter was titled “The Resurrection Men,” which discussed the small handful of brewers and chemists who travel the globe to recreate ancient brews from lost civilizations as accurately as possible. Some of these drinks are, to modern drinkers, beers in name only, but that does not mean I would not get in line to sample them, given a chance. After reading fascinating vignettes about how breweries such as Delaware’s Dogfish Head are bringing long dead beers back to life for the masses, I wanted to learn more. Fortunately, DeSalle and Tattersall point the reader to *Ancient Brews*, a 2017 book by Patrick McGovern, which I have already purchased and am excited to read. This finding is emblematic of *Natural History*’s capacity to serve as a gateway to learning and reading more about the world of beer.

DeSalle and Tattersall are kind enough to warn readers when the book is on the verge of plunging into deep scientific and technical territory. Chapter 5 discusses the molecules that are essential to beer, and the authors alert the reader that some of what is to follow can be safely skipped. In my case, the authors were correct to consider that a detailed and meticulously researched discussion of nitrogenous ring structures and targeted sequencing might be lost on me. But they were also correct in that the ensuing discussions on topics such as the role of yeast in beer brewing and the evolutionary history (a.k.a. the phylogeny) of beer, as supported with a series of figures that belong in posters on the walls of homes and offices of craft beer drinkers all over the world, were easily understood without the molecular details.

A common refrain from researchers across disciplines is that “we don’t know what we don’t know.” Swinnen’s and Briski (2017) *Beeronomics: How Beer Explains the World* opened my eyes to impacts beer has had on markets over the centuries (and even millennia) and made me realize that the business and economic aspects of beer are far more important, interesting, and complex than I had ever considered. *Natural History* showed me this is true across a wide range of disciplines, most of which are referenced by the authors in the opening pages of the book. In some cases, I am happy to leave the deeper understanding and the work on the knowledge frontiers to folks with far greater training and interest in the hard sciences than myself. But in others, I am excited to continue my learning,

read in more depth, and perhaps even pursue some questions I had never before considered in my own research.

A Natural History of Beer is fantastic reading for anyone who loves beer but seeks to understand *why*. It helps to explain beer's place in the world and discusses the positive economic and social impacts of beer and brewing with an even hand, along with some of the beverage's potential downsides. I encourage *JWE* readers to get their hands on this book, read it in whatever chapter order they like, and get in touch with me about what topics it made exciting for you.

Richard Volpe
 Cal Poly State University
rvolpe@calpoly.edu
 doi:10.1017/jwe.2020.25

References

Swinnen J., and Briski, D. (2017). *Beeronomics: How Beer Explains the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ANNA MARIA PONZI: *Pinot Girl: A Family. A Region. An Industry*. Bristol Press, Sherwood, Oregon, 2020, 372 pp., ISBN: 978-1-7345788-0-5 (paperback), \$17.95.

Unlike previous accounts of what it was like to be there at the beginning of the wine industry in the Willamette Valley, Maria Ponzi's memoir is from the point of view of a child. Works such as those by Susan Sokol Blosser (2006, 2017) tell the story from the perspective of the adults who made the decision to relocate to Oregon to grow grapes and make wine in a region deemed inhospitable for this crop as opposed to someone who was swept along. When the success of the region began to be recognized, stories of the pioneers became the subject of several books from an outsider's perspective written by industry observers including Vivian Perry and John Vincent (2013), and Cila Warncke (2015). As the first generation of the industry founders retire, the issue of succession was being resolved in different ways, with a few of the original wineries passing to the second generation. Ponzi's well told tale recounts her initial resentment toward being expected to work from an early age, her brief foray into a different industry, and finally, her return to embrace the family business wholeheartedly and assume its leadership.

Ponzi acknowledges in the introduction: "At first glance, a young girl born into the wine business may seem like she has a charmed life. While the romance has slowly evolved, it was far from that in my early years" (p. xi). Her story is told in two parts, each comprised of short chapters. Part One, by far the longer, covers the