

Reference

Robinson, J., Harding, J., and Vouillamoz, J. (2012). *Wine Grapes: A Complete Guide to 1,368 Vine Varieties, Including Their Origins and Flavours*. London: Penguin.

JAMIE GOODE: *The Goode Guide to Wine: A Manifesto of Sorts*. University of California Press, Oakland, California, 2020, 248 pp., ISBN: 978-0520342460 (hardback), \$18.95.

Think of Goode's fifth book as an assortment of short one-sided conversations on various wine-related topics. As such, this small volume, measuring 4 by 6 inches (10 by 15 cms) and containing fewer than 50,000 words, is a radical departure from his four previous books, and therein lies the challenge for those accustomed to the good doctor's more focused and structured writing. His intended audience is "a broad spectrum of readers, including interested consumers and those in the wine trade" (p. xi). He states that the first half is for the wine drinker and the rest is for the industry. But it is not until the last paragraph that Goode presents his reason for this free-flowing offering: "It's enough to say that wine is worthwhile, complex, and repays attention. It is special. We need to cling to the cultural richness that has its origin in a time and place, and celebrate this fabulous gift. That's why I wrote this book" (p. 228).

By virtue of his decades as a "wine communicator," as he prefers to be called, Goode has gained gravitas and earned the right to share his perspectives. The guide is "an attempt to gather together some of my thoughts about wine, in a series of short, targeted chapters" (p. ix) he explains in the Preface. "My approach to wine is a bit different, and I think it is unique... I was trained as a scientist, but I'm an artist at heart" (p. x), he emphasizes. Unlike the more left-brained *I Taste Red* and *Flawless*, which are important contributions to our understanding of neuro-enology and wine faults, respectively, this collection of musings emanates mostly from his right-hemisphere. The tone is frequently more emotional than educational, although there is at least one instance when he lets loose with technical terminology. Following the Preface are 55 2- to 9-page chapters in no obvious order or interconnection with titles like "Some wines are just wine," "Framing: how words can get in the way," and "Beer is better than wine." A three-page, two-column index is included.

Goode accepts the fact that his views on wine may not be widely held. "I don't expect everyone to agree" (p. xi), he acknowledges. Indeed, it did not take long for me to take issue. Chapter 1, "The heart of authenticity," contains the assertion "...there is something unique about wine in that it is a product of a particular time and place..." (p. 1). While I certainly regard wine as a distinctive beverage, it is not for the reason Goode states. These days, coffee, tea, whiskies, and even cannabis are sourced from specially designed sites and can be vintage-dated. Wine's uniqueness stems from much more than the elusive notion of *terroir* that Goode

fully embraces. It is a product with a history going back to biblical times and a presence and cultural impact across most of the world. It commands religious-like veneration like nothing else borne from the earth.

Chapter 2, “The skill of winegrowing,” encourages the use of the term “winegrower” in place of winemaker. While this is fine if viticulture and oenology are practiced by a single individual, but what if these responsibilities are divided, as is frequently the case?

The scientist makes a rare appearance in Chapter 19, “We are not programmed to like certain wines” (pp. 75–80). Dr. Goode presents a terse but technical analysis of the biological basis for flavor preferences peppered with chemical and genetic nomenclature.

In Chapter 20, “Scores can be useful, but are mostly stupid” (pp. 81–85), Goode rails against scores and tasting notes, which he calls horrible, yet admits to using both. “We experience wine, and then, because of the need to communicate, we have to translate these experiences into words,” he confesses. I like his suggestion to use metaphors to describe a wine, which could at least convey the emotional impact on the taster, rather than trying to dissect and then articulate its flavor. On the other hand, his reason for scoring wines, “because everyone else does, and I want my readers to see quickly how well I liked the wine” (p. 82), is insufficiently convincing, as even he admits he is “deeply uneasy with this practice” (p. 82).

One of Goode’s most important observations is in Chapter 28, “A mystical transformation” (pp. 117–121), which emphasizes the importance of microbes in making wine. “Terroir is latent; it’s the microbial activity that unfurls it and makes it a reality” (p. 118), Goode maintains in a noteworthy aphorism.

On the other hand, some chapter ledes, such as the one for Chapter 44, “Stop trying so hard and just be yourself” (pp. 184–186), try too hard to set the stage for the point he is about to make. Here Goode shares his experience buying a basic used car which he does not “pimp up” as a metaphor for not adjusting wines to try to make them great.

Chapter 37, “Segment or be damned” (pp. 149–152), begins with the ironic proclamation, given the lack of discernable organization in the book, “Many discussions about wine, the wine market, and ‘consumers’ are formless” (p. 149). Then Goode goes on to highlight the obvious: “There’s a big gap between the commodity segment and the fine wine/wine geek segment...with some wine geeks changing their purchasing behavior depending on occasion...” (p. 151).

Chapter 41, “Lead with your best” (pp. 167–169), contains an interesting juxtaposition regarding cheap wines of yore, like Chianti: “...they weren’t very tasty. It’s what the market wanted, though...” (p. 167). This begs the question: What, then, was the attraction? Surely it was more than the straw covered *fiasco*, many of which found a second life as a candle holder.

Goode offers a compelling defense of wine journalism in Chapter 54, “The importance of stories” (pp. 220–224). “To suggest that the merit of a wine lies in how much you ‘enjoy’ the flavor, or how much hedonic appeal it has, is nonsense,” he concludes (p. 223). Instead, he suggests that the fact that stories wine journalists tell influence consumer sales of specific wines to confer a status and impose a responsibility on the profession.

Goode is obviously unafraid to stake positions on all vinous matters. By virtue of his background, his opinions are well informed and, hence, matter. The scope of the issues he addresses range from the obvious to the significant. So, whether a reader might rate a particular chapter bad or good will depend on his or her level of knowledge about wine and the degree of commitment to the industry and culture that have risen up around it. For me? Though I disagree with some of the opinions and with certain emphases and expositions, when it was good, it was very, very Goode.

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WILLI KLINGER and KARL VOCELKA (eds.): *Wine in Austria. The History*. Christian Brandstätter Verlag, Vienna, 2019, 510 pp., ISBN: 978-3710604041 (hard-cover), \$69.66.

Wine is intensely national and regional. Winegrowers and others in the trade regularly interact with state and local actors, from those who enforce the national wine law to the members of the village cooperative. Wine scholars have normalized this dualism by treating wine as a national or regional subject (say, e.g., a study on *Italian* wine, or a book about the region of *Champagne*). While approaching wine through a national or regional lens is organizationally satisfactory, recent scholarship has called out the limitations of both approaches, suggesting instead that a global lens is best suited to portray a trade that is, if nothing else, international in nature. This globalist critique of the dualist *status quo* has been convincing, with the national lens most prone to insufficient generalizations.

Enter *Wine in Austria: The History*. The national paradigm, for all its faults, has found its redeemer. Before embarking on a review of the book, which includes some minor criticisms, I want to make clear upfront my opinion that this book is a masterpiece. In fact, in almost 20 years of reading academic wine publications, I would consider this herculean effort to be the most ambitious, courageous, and interesting that I have encountered. Its 500 pages (including notes) of text from more than 40 contributors are of the highest pedigree, while its color images, luxury binding, and producer-bio inserts (more on these later) make this book irresistibly unique.