

producers. This is appropriate when the climate is similar, but otherwise, it is less clear. Fortunately, the author does mention that “wines grown in close proximity on different soil types have more in common than those grown far away but on the same soils.”

Third, while the author’s command of the French language is superb and his use of French terms to describe winemaking, grape growing, and terroir-related items aids in developing a sense of place for the reader, he occasionally does not define terms in the text or glossary. Examples of such terms include “sans souffre,” “agriculture raisonne,” and “cahier des charges.” Fourth, while the recommendations of wine producers and negociants made in the book are sound, a few important producers may have been omitted. I searched the inventories of one large U.S. and one small regional (mid-Atlantic) wine retailer to ascertain the number of Rhône wine producers (or negociants) in their inventories that were referenced in this book. Forty of the 100 wines of the large retailer and two of the 8 wines of the small retailer inventories were referenced, but several wines in the retailers’ inventories that have received high ratings from acclaimed experts were not included in the book. Fifth and finally, sometimes the descriptions of wines were beyond my ability to interpret them. For example, descriptors used for a Hermitage wine mention a nose of “hung game, forest floor, noble woods and a whiff of woodsmoke and firewood.” And “a mature Hermitage exhales the breath of Smaug.” (Perhaps Tolkien would be amused, but I am befuddled.)

These minor criticisms notwithstanding, this book provides a truly enjoyable and in-depth immersion into the Rhône Valley and its wines. *Wines of the Rhône* by Matt Walls will be a welcome addition to any wine library.

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Jeff Cox: *From Vines to Wines: The Complete Guide to Growing Grapes and Making Your Own Wine*

Storey Publishing, North Adams, MA, 2015, 253 pp., ISBN 978-612124384, \$18.95.

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It may surprise the reader to learn that this is the 5th edition of Jeff Cox’s guide to winemaking. Perhaps even more unexpected is the fact, proudly stated on the cover, that the book has sold over 200,000 copies. That is a lot of readers, and possibly a lot of homemade wine. In the early pages of his book, Cox asserts, “I’m writing this book to express my enthusiasm for the backyard vineyard and basement bodega”

(p. x). As the author of more than 20 books on food, wine, gardening, and landscaping, Cox has built a reputation.

In the book's foreword, Tim Mondavi of the Mondavi wine family states, "*From Vines to Wines* helps provide you with the knowledge you need to become a wine-grower in the best sense of the word" (p. vii). From the early stages of selecting the vines and growing grapes, all the way to fermenting and bottling the wine, Cox walks the reader through the entire process of winemaking to offer necessary information and his interpretation of how anyone can journey from grape to glass.

Complemented by an extensive glossary and an impressive number of tables and illustrations, the book is broken into three distinct parts: Part 1: "Selecting the Vines"; Part 2: "Growing the Grapes"; and Part 3: "Making the Wine." With romantic statements peppered across his pages like "Wine is truly a collaboration of vine and human, and the consummation of their affinity" (p. viii) and "Whether man or woman, you are the husband of the grapes; you have to understand your partner's needs and fulfill them" (p. x), Cox does not veil his love for home winemaking.

In Part 1, "Selecting the Vines," Cox builds on his expertise as a longtime grower and home winemaker, and notes that skill and attention to detail are necessary parts of the "delicate task of home winemaking" (p. 10). In this section of his book, he shares a brief history of wines accompanied by an excerpt on the evolution of modern wine grapes, before moving to topics related to self-education in wine, including descriptions of several popular wine grape categories. After a thorough exploration of vinifera in the United States, including a list of the official American Viticultural Areas, Cox coaches the reader with his recommendations for planting wine grapes in specific U.S. regions. After all, Cox believes, "Identifying the grape that ... grows well and ripens consistently in your climate is perhaps the single most important decision you'll make in your quest for homemade wine" (p. 22).

In Part 2, "Growing the Grapes," Cox begins with a quote attributed to Galileo: "The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent upon it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do" (p. 35). This process begins with selecting the right site to grow grapes. Making use of 8th-grade algebra and a grapevine model, Cox leads the reader through his ratio to calculate the correct size of a vineyard. He makes further use of mathematics to help determine appropriate vine spacing, the correct slope, and the amount of necessary sunlight. These quantitative measures help the novice winemaker connect with concrete data to make informed winemaking decisions.

Importantly, Cox discusses the necessity of examining soil quality and appropriate soil preparation before spending a significant amount of time on grape trellises and trellis systems. Cox leads the reader through multiple trellis options (e.g., one wire, two wire, three wire, lyre or moveable wire, Geneva double-curtain, etc.) before offering his own construction tips to craft a full-scale vineyard trellis, including a list of necessary supplies and tools, and drawings to illustrate his guidance.

At this point, Cox informs his reader that it is time to order and plant grapestock and let "the real adventure begin" (p. 60). Techniques for the management of vineyard rows and aisles, along with irrigation tips and first years' pruning practices, are reported, followed by numerous illustrations of vine growth at various lifecycle stages. Cox provides a 13-step tutorial on how to prune a grapevine and choose a vine

training system (e.g., head training, vertical cordon, four-arm Kniffen training, Hudson River umbrella, etc.).

The last section of Part 2 focuses on pest control strategies. As farming is a largely organic process, Cox cautions the home winegrower to allow for “natural occurring controls” to keep pests at bay and encourages the reader to “learn to tolerate a certain amount of insect presence and damage” (p. 102). Realizing that some pest control may be necessary, Cox discusses the benefits of traps, repellants, sprays, and even insecticides and fertilizers when used sparingly and in moderation. He closes this portion of his book with a discussion of determining the proper ripeness and harvestability of the grapes by explaining brix, titratable acid, and pH ratios.

Finally, in Part 3, “Making the Wine,” Cox is ready to disclose his secrets to home-made winemaking, starting with crushing and fermenting the grapes, including choosing the right primary fermentation vat (e.g., stainless steel drum, food-grade plastic, fresh whiskey barrels, five-gallon glass carboys, etc.). Cox offers his readers specific formulas to apply to determine the precise amount of sulfites, sugars, and acidity to add to the mix. While the continued presence of algebra could be intimidating to the stay-at-home winemaker, Cox uses simple equations to add clarity to an otherwise potentially confusing element of winemaking.

Next, Cox brings his reader through the two stages of primary and secondary fermentation with a step-by-step process to turn grape juice into wine. He discusses storage conditions for wine during the racking, topping, oaking, and aging processes. After a brief overview of filtering, fining, and blending the wine, the author recommends taking final measurements of the pH, acidity, sugars, and alcohol before the bottling stage.

After some sensible guidance on wine bottle selection, corking, and labeling, Cox dedicates a considerable number of pages to making sparkling wine, before discussing best-practice tips for cellaring, including cellar temperature and insulated storage areas. To wrap up Part 3, he shares his preferences for corkscrews and wine glasses, before ultimately closing with a sensory guide for wine evaluation, focusing on clarity, color, rim, legs, nose, aroma, and, finally, the taste and body of the wine. In the final pages, Cox concludes with multiple appendices for the interested reader to learn more about recordkeeping, selected references, supplies, and grapevines, as well as detailed information on vineyard pests and diseases.

In the preface of *From Vines to Wines: The Complete Guide to Growing Grapes and Making Your Own Wine*, Cox quotes a colleague who says, “The best wine to drink in the whole world is homemade wine” (p. x). At the conclusion of the book, Cox challenges his reader to strive to make a wine as superb as the 57-year-old Bordeaux he had the pleasure of drinking one night. After complimenting the exquisite taste and elegance of the wine, Cox asks, “I’d like to make a wine as good as that. Wouldn’t you?” (p. 211).

While the home winemaker may never rise to the reputation of that bottle of fine Bordeaux, Cox seems to genuinely believe that his readers are capable of making good wine, and he strives to enable them to enjoy the process of homemade winemaking. Perhaps that is Cox’s main point: to highlight “the unique affinity between grapevines and humankind” (p. viii), no matter the outcome of the actual wine. And, whether or not a homemade wine is great or barely palatable, Cox believes that much satisfaction

can be derived during the process of home winemaking and time spent experiencing such a symbiotic relationship with nature.

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GRAHAM HARDING: *Champagne in Britain, 1800–1914: How the British transformed a French luxury*

Bloomsbury Academic, London & New York, 2022, 295 pp., ISBN 978-1-3502-0286-3, \$108.00, Can. \$141.75, £81.00.

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Champagne in Britain is an academic monograph, the third in a series on *Food in Modern History* that aims to pay “serious attention to food as a focal point in historical events from the late eighteenth century to the present day.” Its 189 pages of sometimes dense text are supported by 106 pages of endnotes, bibliography, and index. It seems to be written mainly for British readers, who presumably understand, without any explanation, the significance of the relief of Ladysmith and the lifting of the siege of Mafeking. The author turned to academic history after 40 years as a branding and marketing consultant specializing in food and drink. He is an associate of the History Faculty at Oxford, and this book seems to have been based at least in part on his PhD dissertation.

All this is to say that this is not a standard wine book, nor is it a particularly easy read, particularly for non-British readers. On the other hand, if you are interested in wine, history, and the evolution of markets and marketing, *Champagne in Britain* tells—and thoroughly documents—two fascinating, intertwined stories. The first describes the evolution in 19th century Britain of both the product sold as champagne and its social role in the country. The second story focuses on the establishment, around 1880, of a relatively small set of champagne brands that were among the world’s first mass luxury brands, able to command premium prices from a relatively large audience despite considerable competition. Many of those brands, including Moët & Chandon, Louis Roederer, Veuve Clicquot, Pol Roger, and Pommery, have been on the British market since the early 19th century and remain premium brands today. In Britain and elsewhere, they continue to command prices significantly above those of well-made sparkling wines from Italy, California, and other regions.

As I expect readers of this *Journal* know, the province of Champagne in northern France has always had a favorable location near wealthy markets but an unfortunate climate for wine-making. Grapes grown there ripen late, and fermentation is often