

# Sommelier News



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## Champagne, Napoleon, and the Family, Part 1 *A look at Champagne's colorful history*

By J. Herbert Silverman

The *Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne*, more familiarly known as the *CIVC*, has embarked on an ambitious campaign to protect the Champagne name in the United States – and, incidentally, to promote its consumption. This is at a time when production is at its highest, finding demand worldwide strengthened by new markets in Asia and Africa.

Early on, the idea of protecting the Champagne appellation was the brainchild of winemakers from Mumm and Heidsieck in 1882. These growers founded the *Syndi-*

*cat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne*, and established that the word Champagne could refer only to the original growing area of the Department of the Marne and not to the production process which converts any wine into a sparkling state.

U.S. law has a loophole that designates 17 words as "semi-generics" making them allowable on labels of domestically produced wines even when they are not made in such regions as Champagne, Port, Sherry, Burgundy,

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## First Press

By David Wilkening

### Convenience pushing wine pouches

Versus, one of South Africa's most popular wine brands, says it has developed the technology for a new, easy-to-pour, lightweight wine pouch. "Knowing that convenience is of utmost importance to increasingly time-conscious consumers, we believe that the pouch will forge a new and innovative way ahead for the industry as more and more of South Africa's, and the world's, best wines start to unplug themselves," says Chris O'Shea, Executive Director: Sales and Marketing. Versus is a growing favorite in Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Germany and Italy.

### Something different in wine

Israel-based Rimon Winery has released a new limited production pomegranate dessert wine in the US market, believed to be the first of its kind. The winery also makes a pure pomegranate dry wine and port-style wine, both of which should be released later this year, according to the company. "Rimon Winery has perfected the art of making pomegranate wine," says Yoav Gilat, Managing Partner of Cannonball Wine & Spirits, exclusive US representative for Rimon Winery. "Its gold medal-winning wines have been very well received around the world and we are very pleased to finally be able to share them with American wine

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Chablis, Chianti and Tokay, among others.

Interestingly, in the case of sparkling wines, many quality U.S. producers no longer use these names, preferring to identify the domestic region from which they produce their own wine, although circumlocutions such as *méthode classique* and *méthode traditionnelle* occasionally find their way onto labels, overtaking *méthode champenoise*.

But it seems a good time to investigate the bubbly beverage's history. Champagne has always had close, curious, and sometimes colorful ties with French history and its great figures and families.

### Napoleonic Bubbles

Historical records of Napoleon's peripatetic travels show that he slept in dozens of castles, matching George Washington's predilection for colonial farmhouses. The Corsican was somewhat lyrical in his devotion to bubbly when he declaimed, "I cannot live without Champagne. In victory, I deserve it, and in defeat, I need it."

It would be fair to say that the Emperor imbibed only at the great houses in Champagne, resting in sybaritic comfort at their magnificent chateaux. Those *grande marques* were founded well before 1815, the year his career took a turn for the worse at Waterloo where he is said to have drunk only Belgian beer, not Champagne, the night before the battle. *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

### Family Histories 1: Ruinart and Moët

The vineyards around Reims, Epernay and Ay in the Champagne district are the most valuable wine estates in the world and, at \$300,000 an acre, represent holdings that would have appealed to Napoleon's taste for luxury. These included the Abbey at Hautvilliers, residence of Dom Perignon, where the monks of the area turned the white wine into bubbly centuries ago.

The Champagne houses established before the end of the Napoleonic Era included some of the best known marques in today's wine world but only a few are still family-owned. These vineyards have taken great care to preserve the integrity of their labels and their product.

One may require a corporate family tree, however, to track the current ownership of the founding houses. For example, one of the oldest houses, Champagne Ruinart, is part of the Louis Vuitton-Moët Hennessy portfolio which also includes Moët and Veuve Clicquot, two other houses dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Ruinart Père et Fils was founded in 1729, 14 years after the death of the Cistercian monk, Dom Perignon. Ruinart's first account book stated, "In the name of God and the Virgin Mary shall this book be commenced."

Moët & Chandon, the largest of the Champagne houses, was one of the biggest enterprises in France and privately held until 1962 when it became a *société anonyme*. It then merged with Hennessy and Christian Dior to

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"I cannot live without

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Napoleon

*Moët dates to 1743 when it was founded by wine merchant Claude Moët in Epernay. His success was assured when Madame de Pompadour became a regular customer. Her orders were substantial: 200 bottles to be shipped to Compiègne in May before the court took up residence there.*

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form the Moët-Hennessy Group and 20 years ago joined with Louis Vuitton to become the giant LVMH.

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Since royalty seemed indispensable to the success of the *grand marques*, Claude's grandson, Jean-Remy erected a mansion at 20 Avenue de Champagne in Epernay (now part of the company's offices) to host a second court for Napoleon. In 1832, Jean-Remy handed the control of the company to his son, Victor, and his son-in-law, Pierre-Gabriel Chandon de Briailles. Thus was Moët & Chandon born.

Hospitality is a trade mark of French wine growers but one has to go far to match the greeting afforded the very special few who are invited by the company for an overnight at its Chateau de Saran. For guests, the road map provided by Moët is possibly the only such document extant to be engraved. Needless to say, the drink of choice is Dom Perignon and the white glove service rivals the best of Michelin-starred restaurants in France.

### **Family Histories 2: Clicquot**

Moët purchased grapes from the Chateau de Boursault, former residence of the Veuve Clicquot

which had been lavishly renovated in the early 1820's at the urging of a profligate son-in-law, the Comte Louis de Chevigne.

This *grand marque* was rooted in the entrepreneurial efforts of Philippe Clicquot who founded an enterprise in 1772 focused on banking, textiles, and, to a degree, Champagne.

His son, Francois Clicquot, 23, and a Revolutionary veteran, married Nicole-Barbe Ponsardin, 20, in 1798. The wedding was performed appropriately in a champagne cellar since the churches in Reims had not been returned by the Revolution to the people.

It was Francois who transformed the firm and expanded its vineyard operation, traveling abroad to find rich and influential clients. Unfortunately, he died of the fever at the age of 30. His remarkable widow (the *Veuve Clicquot*) then 27 with daughter Clementine to rear, took over management and emerged as the first woman to hold power in this male-dominated world.

The Veuve Clicquot managed to capture the Russian market at the beginning of the Napoleonic Era. Said her manager, M. Bohne, "I am reliably informed that the Czarina is with child. If it will be a prince, oceans of Champagne will be drunk in this immense country. Please do not say a word; otherwise our competitors will arrive here in droves."

After Napoleon's fall, Clicquot, whose shipment had been interdicted by the Allied blockade, loaded a ship secretly with champagne so it was the first to

*(Continued on page 4)*

*The House of Perrier-Jouët was founded in 1811 born of a passionate affair between Pierre Nicolas Perrier, 25 and Adèle Jouët, 18. Nicolas added his wife's name to the label to distinguish the company from other Perriers in the district. The company had been a cork maker to Madame Clicquot and, in 1813, purchased the cellars from which it continues to operate.*

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arrive in a "thirsty" Russia even before the peace was signed. From that moment on, the prestige of Clicquot certainly was assured during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

La Veuve Clicquot died in 1866 at the age of 89, bequeathing her vineyards to Edouard Werle and his family. He had joined her in 1821 and saved her from bankruptcy. It was his management skills that made Clicquot and its distinctive gold label (as well as the Rosé Champagne, a house specialty) a world success.

### **Family Histories 3: Perrier-Jouët**

The Napoleonic Wars were a heady time for the Champagne producer. The House of Perrier-Jouët was founded in 1811 born of a passionate affair between Pierre Nicolas Perrier, 25 and Adèle Jouët, 18. Nicolas added his wife's name to the label to distinguish the company from other Perriers in the district. The company had been a cork maker to Madame Clicquot and, in 1813, purchased the cellars from which it continues to operate.

The *vignerons* of Epernay were noted not only for their wines but also for their imposing chateaux. No exception to this sign of success, M. Perrier-Jouët built a grand mansion on the Avenue de Champagne which today houses the town's library.

In mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century, like many of its *compères*, Perrier Jouët compiled a list of noble customers who had the taste – and the money - for their champagne. The list included Napoleon III and Queen Victoria

whose household seems to have had an insatiable appetite for grand marque labels.

The court of Buckingham Palace was a major customer by any standard. One order in 1861 requested 100 dozen bottles of the 1857 vintage and 48 dozen of the same vintage for the Prince of Wales.

Control of the family-owned Perrier-Jouët passed to a nephew, Henri Gallice who, concerned about improving an international image, commissioned Emile Gallé, the noted art nouveau French glassmaker, to create a bottle for the ultimate *cuvée* in 1902.

Gallice conceived the famous flower design for the PJ bottle but because the four prototype magnums had to be hand-painted, they were relegated to the cellar's equivalent of an attic. The decorative bottle, which disappeared during WWII, was rediscovered at war's end.

The resurrected and extraordinary bottle festooned with anemones, inspired a new *cuvée* Fleur de Champagne, as well as a *rosé* version glowing with a touch of red wine from the tiny village of Bouzy. Today, it is still decorated by hand in a tiny Parisian workshop and remains as carefully guarded as the *cuvée assemblage*.

In 1959, the House of Mumm became a majority shareholder in Perrier-Jouët and both houses later "fell" under the control of the House of Seagram. From there it moved to Allied Domecq and, most recently, to Pernod Ricard after the wine and spirits

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*Pierre Taittinger was a young cavalry officer serving under the French general. Enchanted by the lovely 18th century mansion, Taittinger determined to purchase it if the opportunity ever arose.*

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giant acquired Domecq.

#### **Family Histories 4: Taittinger and Mumm**

War is no stranger to Champagne. The French national hero during WW I was Marshal J. J. Joffre who took up residence in the Chateau de la Marquetterie in nearby Epernay, two miles from the Marne River, and made it his command post.

Pierre Taittinger was a young cavalry officer serving under the French general. Enchanted by the lovely 18th century mansion, Taittinger determined to purchase it if the opportunity ever arose.

In 1914 he executed a contract whose main clause stipulated that the agreement was dependent on his survival since the casualty rate among officers of the day was about 60 percent. Taittinger survived, purchased the mansion and the vineyards and established one of the *grande marques* in Champagne. Unwittingly, he also created one of the region's most interesting tourist destinations.

Most recently, Pierre Emmanuel Taittinger has returned to family ownership the entire group of Taittinger holdings (Concorde Hotels, Baccarat Crystal and Annick Goutal perfumes) from Starwood Capital which had purchased them several years ago.

And there's still another WWI

story of Champagne to be told. The great house of Mumm which dates to 1827, was actually founded by two Rhineland Germans, Peter Arnold Mumm and Fredrich Gisler. Though they lived in Reims, they did not bother to take out French citizenship. As a result when WWI broke out, the Mumm Champagne house was confiscated by the French Government as a property of enemy aliens. In 1920, it was put up for auction and became a publicly held corporation.

Some twenty years later, in 1940, when the Germans arrived in Champagne, a young German officer showed up at the Mumm cellars, opened the doors with the family keys and said, "Bonjour, I am here to assume my office as general manager."

The soldier was Godefroy Hermann von Mumm, the great-grandson of the founder, with the keys given to him by his father. The younger von Mumm supervised operations in relative military comfort until he was summarily relieved of that post by the Allied forces.

Needless to say, when René Lalou, head of the company before the war, took over again at war's end, his first task was to change locks.

*The second, concluding section of this article, will appear in the next issue of Sommelier News.*

***J. Herbert Silverman is writing a book about colorful characters in the wine and spirits business and a history of Irish whiskey.***

## Great Wine Capitals

*League of major wine cities boosts tourism, education, and economic ties*

By Roger Morris

*The organization is called the Great Wine Capitals, and it is the brainchild of Robert Beynat of the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce.*

Think of it this way: If wine-growing were a big-league sport, and you wanted to choose one city per country to represent the nation's wine culture, which places would you pick? And what would be the qualifying factors that you would consider?

So, get out a sheet of paper and your wine atlas.

To take the second question first, the country would have to be a big player on the international wine stage – so that leaves out England and Panama. Second, the city would have to be large enough to have the infrastructure to support both the team and the legions of fans from elsewhere. And it would have to be located near a major wine region.

So what would *your* fantasy International Winegrowers League look like?

As it turns out, such a league

already exists, although it's a co-operative league and not a competitive one. It has eight cities, which can be separated into two divisions. Here's how it looks:

### Old World Division

Bordeaux  
Florence  
Porto  
Bilbao/Rioja

### New World Division

Cape Town  
San Francisco/Napa Valley  
Melbourne  
Mendoza

The organization is called the Great Wine Capitals, and it is the brainchild of Robert Beynat of the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce. The Bordeaux Chamber is also the majority stockholder in VinExpo,

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# Great Wine Capitals

GLOBAL NETWORK

*... a world of excellence*

*If winegrowing were a big-league sport, and you wanted to choose one city per country to represent the nation's wine culture, which places would you pick? And what would be the qualifying factors that you would consider?*

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the international wine festival that rotates its venue annually between Bordeaux city and a city in the Far East, with two previous side forays into New York and Chicago. Beynat also serves as CEO of VinExpo.

Catherine Leparmentier, over coffee in the breakfast room on the seventh floor of the Hotel Mercure overlooking downtown Bordeaux, recalls how it all began. "My boss – Robert – came to me one day and explained his idea. Then he said, 'Well, Catherine...'" That was in the late 1990s, and today Leparmentier

serves as the permanent secretary of the Great Wine Capitals (GWC).

At its core, Wine Capitals is an organization that provides introductions for people in one capital looking to do business in another – whether the business is wine or otherwise – and serves as a resource for the best practices of each of the eight cities, particularly in the area of wine tourism.

"Melbourne was the city that took the first bite," when the Bordeaux Chamber started shopping the idea, Leparmentier

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**Catherine Leparmentier of the GWC**

[Photo by Roger Morris]

*When the organization  
officially formed in 1999,  
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Melbourne, Santiago,  
San Francisco, Florence,  
and Porto. Cape Town  
came next, then Bilbao and  
Mendoza.*

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says. When the organization officially formed in 1999, there were six founding members – Bordeaux, Melbourne, Santiago, San Francisco, Florence, and Porto. Cape Town came next, then Bilbao and Mendoza. Unfortunately, Santiago dropped out. “It is a large city with many interests other than wine,” Leparmentier explains, and officials there felt they could get the same services elsewhere.

But it did create a void, as Chile is a big wine producer, and it doesn’t have another city that would easily qualify as Santiago’s successor. “We would love to have a Chilean city,” Leparmentier emphasizes.

“We want to be able to create links, to network,” she says. “We want to help business and investment people to be able to knock on any door in any of our cities.” For example, the GWC staff in Bordeaux recently worked with the staff in San Francisco to arrange introductions for a high-tech tour for French businessmen.

The second objective after networking is education and R&D, but that objective has hit some snags. “We wanted to create education and wine R&D links,” Leparmentier says, “but we found winegrowers didn’t need it – they were already networking with each other. So we’ve changed our emphasis to consumer education.”

To that end, the GWC has created inter-city consumer wine tastings, targeted consumer research on such things as wine label design and information, and education by video-conferencing for the rising number of consumers in the Asian market. Addi-

tionally, a wine MBA program involving a wide range of experiences from the different member regions has begun.

However it is in the area of wine tourism that the Great Capitals has made its greatest mark, soliciting wine tourism competitions within its member cities, both to serve as a best practices program and as a resource for wine travelers.

The program has been especially competitive in Bordeaux and Napa Valley. “We had 140 applications from Bordeaux chateaux for wine tourism awards,” Leparmentier says, and the current GWC tourism booklet lists 30 chateaux and organizations that offer consumer-friendly programs. These include very petite chateaux to such recognizable names as Giscours, Pichon-Longueville, Kirwan, and Pape Clément. Additionally, one travel agency per city has been recognized officially for its services and has been designated the agency of choice in that region for the GWC.

It’s little wonder, then, that other wine cities are anxious to join Great Wine Capitals, although the one capital per country rule leaves out any other wine cities in the eight countries already represented. According to Leparmentier, wine cities in Hungary, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Germany (Mainz) have expressed serious interest, and she says a major objective of the GWC is getting a good wine capital for New Zealand.

These and other matters will be taken up at the Great Wine Capital’s annual meeting, which this year is taking place in Porto this November. Key on the five-

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day agenda are the announcing of the 2008 Best of Wine Tourism Awards, the Porto Wine Festival's tasting of wines from the new and old worlds, visits to various Portuguese wine estates, and seminars on wine marketing and wine tourism. Last year event's was held in Mendoza, and in 2008 it will be held in Cape Town.

If I were on the GWC expansion committee, I would be looking at Auckland or Marlborough in New Zealand, a major suburb of Santiago such as Puente Alto or Valparaiso near Casablanca Valley, Budapest in Hungary, Mainz or Wiesbaden in Germany, Vienna for Austria, and Lausanne or Geneva for Switzerland.

Switzerland? Every league needs a Green Bay. •

*Roger Morris, who describes himself as a free-range writer, regularly contributes to Sommelier News as well as Saveur, Beverage Media, The Wine Enthusiast, Drinks, Intermezzo and other publications.*

## Talking Slow with Glen Siegel and Paul DeCampo

I met up with Paul De Campo, Convivium Leader of Slow Food Toronto one morning for some coffee and conversation about Slow Food Toronto.

**GCS:** Paul, what is a "convivium"?

**PDC:** It's kind of a made-up word but it's based on the Italian phrase that means "with life."

**GCS:** I know that you are the Convivium Leader of Slow Food Toronto. What is Slow Food about? From what I read on the web site, it seems to be part way between a "foodie's club" and an ecological association.

**PDC:** The Slow Food movement was started in Italy in 1986. It's an organization that is focused on taste, as in foods and wines that taste good. It can be seen as somewhat indulgent but consciously thinking about taste leads you towards eating foods that are less processed, more diverse, more local. Food will taste better if it is grown locally instead of being shipped in from across the continent. For example, local tomatoes and local heirloom tomatoes taste better than the imported ones. Slow Food focuses on good, clean, fair food and by that we mean that it is good to eat and supports local agriculture, that it is clean as it is organically grown by farmers working in a sustainable manner and that you pay a fair price and the farmer gets a fair price. One way to describe it is "eco-gastronomy".

**GCS:** Your day job is with the Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery and most of the people involved with Slow Food are related to the hospitality industry. There seems to be very few "regular people".

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**PDC:** Slow Food tends to attract people from the hospitality industry as it is an expressed interest for them. The taste and looks of the food really matter to them. They think about what will make food not only taste better but also present better. We would like to have more regular people, more consumers.

**GCS:** There appears to be an affinity between Slow Food and wine producers more so than other food producers. Do you think this is so, and why do you think it happens?

**PDC:** I think that it might be because of the formal wine tasting. You consciously focus on the taste experience and how to describe it. It is a conscious taste experience. You then tend to want to have the same experience with other foods. After all, wine is a food too!!

As I mentioned before, the Slow Food movement started in Italy after the 1985 diethylene glycol scandal where diethylene glycol was added to the wines produced in Italy and Austria. People started to think about the food, where it came from, how it was grown. At the time, a great deal of the food in Italy was mass produced. People started to go back to their roots and to farm on a small and sustainable scale. Overall production went down but the value of the products went up. They were producing really good food of higher value. As the farmers were closer to the consumers, they got more of the final price. As I said before, good, clean fair food.

**GCS:** Slow Food places a lot of emphasis on sourcing locally but what about the winter in Canada?

**PDC:** Not everything can be sourced all year locally but you can shift your diet to foods that are available. For example, we are encouraging people to revive the old traditions of canning, drying and preserving when the food is in season. If you have your own garden, you can also stretch the growing season by using cold frames and hilling some vegetables, all things that were done 50 years ago.

**GCS:** And what about foods that you can't get locally? Burgundy, coffee, truffles?

**PDC:** Slow Food doesn't want you to give those up! Just be aware of the relationship between the producer and you. Make your purchasing decisions so that you pay a fair price and the original producer gets a fair price.

**GCS:** What is the Slow Food Ark??

**PDC:** The Ark is a project to conserve the diversity of local heirloom plants. The Slow Food organization wants to protect them against the flood of industrialized, genetically modified polluted foods that are being produced that are used in the large commercial farming operations.

In Canada, Red Fife wheat had almost disappeared even though it is historically important here. We are also hoping to conserve the Canadian cow, Chantecler chicken and the Gravenstein apple, all Canadian heritage farm products.

**GCS:** When I was in California last summer, they claimed to be the home of the Gravenstein Apple.

**PDC:** They are the home of the California Gravenstein. Similar but different apples!

**GCS:** Finally, your current project is called the '07 Picnic at the Brick Works. What's it about??

For more information about Slow Food Toronto, go to the website: <http://toronto.slowfood.ca> and for information about the international Slow Food movement, visit <http://www.slowfood.com/>.

***Glen Siegel is a Toronto-based Sommelier, teacher, food and wine lover.***

## Haute Cocktails

*Kitchen technique bellies up to the bar at LA's Sona*

By Lesley Jacobs

### HONEY AND GINGER

1.5 shots Famous Grouse  
Scotch

¾ shot honey syrup

¾ shot ginger syrup

1 shot lemon juice

\* fresh ginger slices  
optional

Combine all ingredients. Shake all ingredients and strain over ice. Top with half a shot smoky Scotch (Laphroaig works well); garnish with dehydrated ginger.



Chef David Myers of Sona Restaurant in Los Angeles stands behind the long, sleek bar that welcomes his customers as they enter his Zen-like restaurant. Right now, the chef is anything but Zen as he wields a stainless steel pick, chipping away at a solid hunk of ice. A gleam comes to his eye as he looks up and says to me, "This is the 'Basic Instinct' technique – I can see why she liked it."

This apparent love affair with ice is important because ice, among other elements, is key to Myers' vision of Bar Noir at Sona, a bar that balances the best elements of classic cocktail preparation with a nod to modern, freshly made ingredients.

Since it opened, Sona has racked up a wall full of commendations, including several years of Wine Spectator Grand Awards, as well as Myers being named one of Food & Wine's Best New Chefs of 2003. Myers' exquisite food is grounded in French technique, but he takes it to new levels by incorporating the best of Japanese and California cuisine, and allowing artisanal, organic, and seasonal ingredients to dictate his menu.

Yet, for all his attention to detail in the kitchen, Myers realized that the "one area I was completely missing was the bar – there wasn't the skill level." That skill level began with Myers him-

self, who had never tended bar and wanted to know what made a really good one tick. Visits to London, Tokyo, and New York, where he watched old-school bartending pros in action, convinced him that he needed a signature cocktail list that was as exceptional as his lauded menu. And just like a chef planning a menu, he recognized that "great ingredients, great spirits rule the day. They make a drink better – give it an edge."

As in the kitchen, basic ingredients need to be of the highest quality. Sona's resident bartender, Lauren Balefsky, says, "Chef David has brought the kitchen to the bar... if we want a syrup, we make it ourselves; otherwise, we find other ways to bring those flavors into the drink."

One of Lauren's favorite tricks is "spanking the mint." Literally as it sounds, she slaps a mint leaf between her hands, a secret she learned from the kitchen staff that releases the herb's essential oils. This slapped mint is essential for Sona's take on the traditional daiquiri, which uses Gosling's Dark Rum, fresh lime juice, simple syrup, and mint and kumquat muddled together.

Menu ingredients have also been applied to the Indonesian Vodka Sour, which uses pungent Indonesian peppercorns and vanilla bean syrup to reinvent a classic in a surprisingly provocative manner.

But ingredients are only the tip of the iceberg. Technique is key as well. For Myers, three New

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## CUCUMBER MINT MOJITO

Combine in mixing glass and muddle together:

5 mint sprigs

5 cucumber slices

1 slice fresh ginger

1 shot of lime juice

Add 1.5 shots of either Vodka or Gin or your choice.

Add ½ an egg white

Shake all ingredients and strain over ice. Garnish with a slice of cucumber.

## INDONESIAN VODKA SOUR

1 Tblsp. crushed Indonesian peppercorns

1 shot vanilla bean syrup

1 shot lemon juice

½ shot lime juice

1.5 shots vanilla vodka

Combine ingredients. Shake and strain over ice. Garnish with a vanilla bean.

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York bartenders – Sammy and Mickey of Milk & Honey, and Richie at Little Branch – stood out, not only because of their passion, but for the precision with which they make their drinks.

By spending hours hovering over the bars, notebook in hand, Myers started to see a pattern. “The bartenders,” he says, “taught me that technique is first, grace is second, and creativeness is third.”

When it comes to technique, according to Myers, 90% of bartenders pour one to two times as much as they should by free-pouring. For instance, Sona’s Mojito takes 1.5 *measured* shots of gin or vodka, reducing the burn and allowing for, in Myers’ opinion, “an absolute expression of spirit.”

But none of these ingredients or techniques means a thing if the true flavor of the drink can’t shine through.

That brings us back to the issue of ice. There’s a simple reason that the best bars use block ice, chipped to order. A single, good-sized hunk of ice results in a slow melt; multiple ice cubes each melt individually, diluting the drink. And the best block ice is made from filtered water, which makes for a more pure-tasting drink. Myers recalls that sourcing out a reliable, high quality block ice supplier was “a brutal thing to do,” but it was absolutely essential to his newly-

embraced bartending philosophy.

Ironically, for all his mixologist’s passion, Myers has never been much of a cocktail drinker. Now, though, he often feels seduced by the bar and can frequently be found there, auditioning ingredients for a new concoction or simply making up something for a favored guest. It’s no surprise that he has thought of opening an old-style speakeasy bar as a side project.

Watching him work, he seems at one with the bar environment, putting all he has learned into play. After dropping a chunk of crystal clear block ice into a glass, he exactly measures out his ingredients – a mellow Scotch, honey and ginger syrups, lemon juice, and a half shot of Laphroig. Shaken briskly, the mix is poured into the glass. This is a “Honey and Ginger” and it’s a tribute to a drink called Penicillin created by Milk & Honey’s Sammy. Myers pushes it forward, waits expectantly as I sip. The smokiness of the Laphroig is tamed by the honey; the lemon and ginger balance one another out. It may not be Sammy’s Penicillin, but it’s just what the doctor ordered.

I ask Chef Myers, what exactly is the key ingredient in a successful bar menu? He ponders briefly, and then says as if it’s obvious, “there is no key ingredient. It’s a combination of a lot of little things done right – just like life.” •

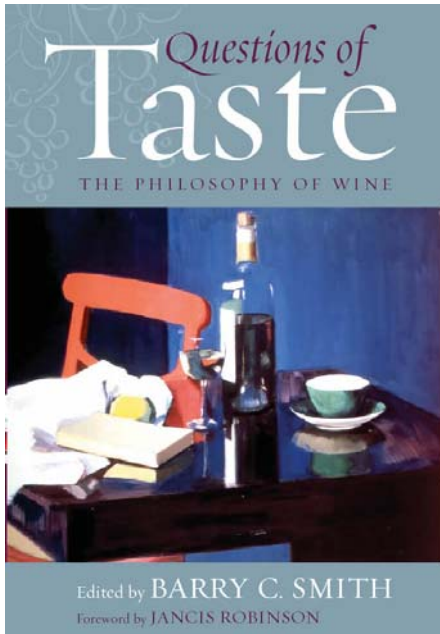
*Lesley Jacobs is a freelance food and wine writer, who also consults and teaches on these subjects through her company EAT-DRINK-PLAY. She has written for Gourmet, Wine Enthusiast, Relish, Santa Barbara and C magazines, and the Dining Out guides.*

## Tudor's Picks

### Dean Tudor surveys recent books of interest to Sommeliers

By Dean Tudor

**QUESTIONS OF TASTE; the philosophy of wine** (Oxford University Press, 2007, 222 pages, ISBN 978-0-19-533146-2)

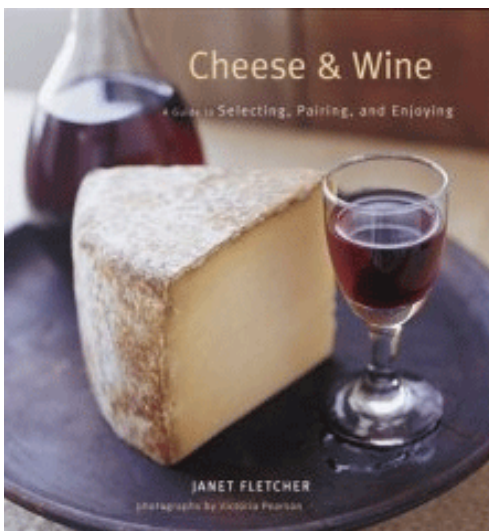


The book is edited by Barry C. Smith, an academic who teaches philosophy at the University of London. It is a collection of 10 essays, by different people, dealing with the philosophical issues of tasting wine. Each contributor has something to say about how we taste wine, based on the quotation from Voltaire, "Taste invites reflection." It obviously sets us apart from any other living creature, that is, the ability to discuss merits. The essays are based on the proceedings of an international conference entitled "Philosophy and Wine: from science to subjectivity," held in December of 2004 at the University of London. This makes it all scholarly, with end notes and bibliographies for further reading. It is meant for the serious wine consumer, especially the one who reads about wine. Five philosophers, a linguist, a biochemist, a winemaker (Paul Draper, who got his college degree in philosophy), and a wine writer (Andrew Jefford) try to illuminate the philosophical issues surrounding a love of wine, always returning to the initial "why?" Questions posed: can wines be brawny? (reflections on wine vocabulary by Adrienne Lehrer); what good is knowledge in enjoying wine? (Kent Bach). And more: Does a wine expert enjoy wine more than a novice does? How much should we care about what experts say about wine? This is not an easy book to read; it is a bit turgid in places. But it is also a great read on the experience of enjoying wine.

Try to read it with a glass of great red wine next to you.

**Audience:** philosophers, sommeliers, advanced wine consumers.

**CHEESE & WINE; a guide to selecting, pairing, and enjoying** (Chronicle Books, 2006, 2007; distr. Raincoast, 144 pages, ISBN 978-0-8118-5743-7)

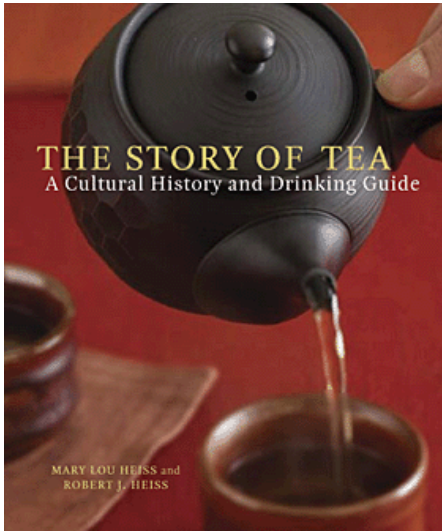


This guide is by Janet Fletcher, food columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, and a winner of two Beards and at least one IACP. She writes cookbooks and magazine articles on food. Here she presents a basic guide to cheeses, with wine matches, as one might find in the American marketplace. Thus, there are 16 US cheeses here, six from England include Cheshire, Stilton, and Wensleydale; there's Feta from Greece, 23 cheeses from France, nine from Italy and nine from Spain. Switzerland gets five. Seventy international cheeses are covered, including such as Vermont Cheddar and Pecorino Toscano from Italy. For each cheese, alphabetically arranged in the book, she gives its origin, characteristics, phonetic spelling, and complementary wines (there's an international selection). Other material embraces selecting, pairing, handling, and serving cheese. For the latter she has developed cheese platter themes.

**Audience:** basic reference tool for servers, sommeliers, and students of wine and food.

(Continued from page 13)

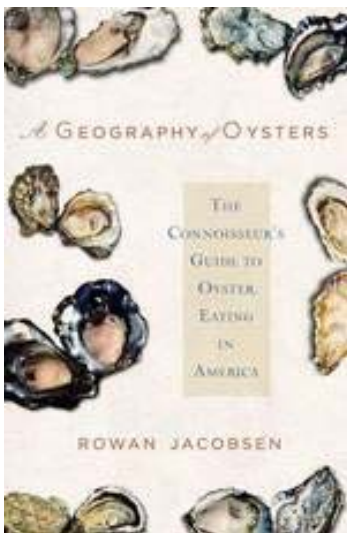
**THE STORY OF TEA; a cultural history and drinking guide** (Ten Speed Press, 2007, 417 pages, ISBN 978-1-58008-745-2)



This guide is by Mary Lou Heiss and Robert J. Heiss, owners and operators of a specialty tea and food store since 1974. This guide covers global history and some terroir. There is a dictionary of tea varieties, and there are good guidelines for selecting, storing, and brewing tea. There is a section called "life of a tea bush." There are also only 9 recipes that use tea as an ingredient. They do cover the latest research on the healthful benefits of drinking tea, and the ethics of the tea industry and the regulatory organizations with their certification principles. This delves into organic production and fair trade practices and issues. They have lots of sidebars and a resource list of books, glossary, vocabulary used to describe tea, and a buyer's resource of supply with websites. Overall, this is a posh production, broad in scope, engaging and nicely put together.

**Audience:** sommeliers, tea lovers, gift givers.

**A GEOGRAPHY OF OYSTERS; the connoisseur's guide to oyster eating in North America** (Bloomsbury, 2007; distr. Raincoast, 289 pages, ISBN 978- 1-59691-325-7)



Food writer Rowan Jacobsen's *Geography* is the third oyster book to be published in the past year. Jacobsen says that taste relies on *terroir*. Oysters are the food that most tastes like the sea, because that is where they are. He describes how oysters take on their flavor. About 130 oysters are covered. Part one is "Mastering oysters": what they are, how to taste, and the like. Part two is "Oyster Appellations of North America," covering the Maritime Provinces, BC coastline, and oysters throughout North America. There are even oyster tours which one can take. Part three is a big resources section on shopping, shucking, and serving. Here you'll find a list of oyster festivals and bars, and growers who ship direct. This includes wine and oyster matches to specific varieties, sake, campari and soda, and beer as well. There are 21 recipes for the basics of hangtown fry, lemon oyster shooter, baked oysters.

**Audience and level of use:** sommeliers, chefs, oyster lovers, reference libraries.

*Dean Tudor is Professor Emeritus and Ryerson University. He writes extensively about wine and food.*

## SOMMELIER OF THE MONTH: Wendy Vallaster

*Spanish boots of Spanish leather, and a sharp sword*

By Liisa Sullivan

### What is your most memorable wine? Why?

I have so many good memories. Many of them involve a combination of fantastic wine, dynamic company, and an electric atmosphere. Notably, a bottle of 1971 Bouchard Chambolle-Musigny knocked my socks off. I actually managed to write tasting notes the next day as I was contemplating the event over a double espresso

(and a bottle of Gatorade). On the nose, there were floral notes, burnt caramel, five spice, and candied-orange peel. It maintained its acidity and the candied-orange peel on the palate; it was probably at its peak.

### How did you develop an interest in wine?

I have worked in bars most of my adult life and had come to the

*(Continued on page 16)*



**Wendy Vallaster of the Spanish Wine Academy**

*[I]n September, I moved to Spain to work at the Wine Academy. The Academy is involved in so many inspiring, wine-related fields. They are currently putting together a great sherry course. I will have the opportunity to travel around the world teaching their Spanish wine courses with them.*

(Continued from page 15)

end of that particular learning curve. At my last job as a pub manager, I put together a small wine program and started studying wine. There was no looking back. I quickly realized that I had discovered my passion. I cannot think of a day since where wine has not played a part in my life. At this point, there is really no separation between work and wine, wine and life.

### **What is your current position?**

For the last year and a half, I have been the Director of Wine and Sommelier at the Terminal City Club in downtown Vancouver, which was an incredible the experience. I have been one of the few lucky sommeliers given the opportunity to develop an entire wine program from scratch, and in a very prestigious environment. I also arranged a series of wine-maker dinners and fireside chats with producers from all over the world. I also make every effort to accommodate the local wine community by showcasing their wines at trade and public events.

But in September, I moved to Spain to work at the Wine Academy. The Academy is involved in so many inspiring, wine-related fields. They are currently putting together a great sherry course. I will have the opportunity to travel around the world teaching their Spanish wine courses with them. We hosted a course in Vancouver at the Terminal City Club and I was impressed by how well the courses are put together.

Now, I source the wines for the courses, and keep the cellar in order. It has been suggested that I begin studying the Master of Wine program, with an offer of sponsorship, but we will see what the future brings.

### **What is your personal goal when it comes to being a sommelier?**

This is the easiest question for me — to see a healthy wine culture that continues to develop and flourish. I firmly believe that people need to have a comfortable atmosphere where they can enjoy new and exciting wine experiences. Food pairings, proper glassware, excellent service, good information, and exciting conversation all contribute to a positive, overall experience. I love introducing people to wines that they would never consider drinking on their own.

### **What is your most memorable wine-related experience? Why?**

I have had some fantastic opportunities to drink a little wine with a lot of interesting people — producers, marketing directors and wine geeks. This whole last year and a half has been an incredible wine-related experience. Specifically, a recent and memorable experience involved some good friends, a bottle of 1970 Mouton, 1971 Bouchard Chambolle-Musigny, and a 1969 Giscours, none of which we began to open until around 3 a.m. Ha! Does that sound fun or what?! You can bet it was! Although I must say I was a little embarrassed walking across the Granville Street Bridge at 6:30 a.m. with my heels in my hands. (Or, was that my head in my hands?)

### **If stranded on a deserted island what three wines would you like to have with you? Why?**

I love this question! A bottle of vintage champagne, something with a little age on it, maybe a 1990 — most likely a grower's

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## Sommelier News Mission Statement

The International  
Sommelier Newsletter  
currently reaches more  
than 17,000 readers

Our Aims are:

- To provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience of food and beverage industry professionals and enthusiasts world-wide.
- To spread enthusiasm for wine, beer and spirits with intelligent, educationally-oriented material.
- To encourage input and contributions from our readers in all aspects of wine, beer, and spirits.
- To encourage diverse perspectives on the beverage alcohol industry, and to study our topics from the earth to the table.

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of their submissions and their opinions may not represent those of the International Sommelier Guild

(Continued from page 16)

champagne as I find they generally provide a great combination of complexity and reflect the efforts that the producers put into them. It would also be a great pairing for the oysters I would be feasting on! Of course, I'd have to find something fun and interesting to saber it with.

Second, a bottle of Pinot. I would opt for a Domaine de la Romanée Conti. I have read so much about this wine and have never had the opportunity to taste it. I'd take any vintage. I'd have plenty of time to contemplate it.

Lastly, I would choose something a little bigger, but smooth. A bottle of 1995 Dominio de Pingus should be coming into its own by now. I have yet to drink enough of this wine to fully understand it.

### What is your favorite grape?

That's like asking which one of your kids you love the most! But, if I had to choose, it would be Pinot Noir.

### What wine resources are a must have?

*2000 Champagnes* by Richard Juhlin and the *Oxford Companion to Wine*. Mostly though, friends and colleagues who constantly provide me with love and support! They have been the building blocks of my success.

### If you could go back in time (or in the present) who would you most like to sit down with, have dinner and talk about wine?

Louise Pommery. She was

*Liisa Sullivan is a freelance writer who specializes in writing about the food and wine business.*

such a dynamic personality, and in that era she did a lot of good work in the name of champagne. We all need to drink more champagne.

### Do you do many wine and food pairings? What are some of your favorites?

Yes. When we do a winemakers' dinner, the producer or agent, myself, the Executive Chef and Executive Sous Chef sit down to taste, talk about their components, and discuss their flavors and textures. I then make the wine selection and the chef puts the menu together based on this creative process. Our culinary team is brilliant. The outcome has been a consistent string of extremely successful pairings.

My personal favorite pairing is duck and pinot noir. When I get home late, I often order in some barbecue duck, gai lan in garlic sauce, and steamed rice, open up a nice bottle of Pinot — Burgundy and Oregon are my favorites. There are also some incredible Pinots coming out of British Columbia too.

### Plans for the future?

My friend and colleague, Keith Nicholson, and I are putting together a huge champagne saber event and reception to take place during the Playhouse Wine Festival at the end of February 2008. We are seeking 200 experienced sabers and intend to challenge the Guinness Book of World Records with the most bottles of champagnes sabered simultaneously!!

### Anything else that you would like to add...

Keep learning, and living the dream... •

## Where Are they Now? Or, Building the Sommelier Community

**Sommelier News is interested in compiling an alumni directory for graduates of the Sommelier Diploma Program. Graduates of the SDP are encouraged to submit a listing stating the following:**

**Name**

**Graduation Year**

**Title/Position**

**Business Contact Information**

**In every issue, we will feature**

**Sommeliers on the Move, where graduates can announce new titles, positions and responsibilities.**

**Email to**

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## First Press

*(Continued from page 1)*

enthusiasts."

### Picking pumpkins

Quivira Vineyards & Winery in Napa Valley is inviting guests to "Pick Your Own Pumpkin" this fall from their organic gardens. Quivira Vineyards & Winery will release Zinfandel, Rhone varietals and a Sauvignon Blanc this fall with grapes from their Organic and Biodynamic vineyards.

### Australian Wine market reaches record

Why have Australian wine exports topped \$3 billion in a year for the first time? Easy answer: surges in demand from the US and China. The US is poised to overtake the UK as the most lucrative market. And the Chinese market has risen 125 percent. "We have achieved it on the back of growth of bottled wine sales, and that reflects an increase in the price per litre and upper quality scale - that is clearly where we see our future," Sam Tolley, CEO of the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation, told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

### High-flying wine

Horizon Air serves wines and microbrews at no extra charge as part of its regular in-flight service to passengers 21 years or older on all of its flights to Sonoma County. In addition to the usual two pieces of baggage that can be checked at no charge, Horizon will accept a box of up to 12 bottles of wine per passenger at no extra charge from customers on flights departing Sonoma County. The wine must be

packaged to courier standards for shipment, according to a PR release.

### Wine consumption is US takes giant leap forward

US wine consumption took a great leap forward in 2006, rising an impressive 3.4 percent and continuing the sector's climb for the 13th consecutive year, according to the 2007 edition of the Adams Wine Handbook, published by Adams Beverage Group. "Wine sales have sustained this long-term growth thanks to the industry's success in appealing to a wide range of consumers," says Charles Forman, vice president and group publisher, Adams Beverage Group. Sales were so strong that if the wine industry's expansion continues at this pace, the United States will become the largest wine market in the world by the end of the decade. Wine now appeals to a broad spectrum of the population, including the much sought-after Millennials (consumers 21-30). In a recent Gallup poll, for the first time, a majority of respondents claimed wine as their alcohol beverage of choice.

### Champagne market going flat in UK?

Global demand for champagne means there could soon be a worldwide shortage - with Britons likely to be the first to miss out, according to the *Daily Mail*. Vineyard owners in eastern France are refusing to sell tens of millions of bottles stocked in their cellars because they see them as their retirement "nest-eggs," says the newspaper. The result is that the

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## INTERNATIONAL Sommelier GUILD

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*and Paul Martzoukos*

## First Press

*(First Press, Continued from page 18)*

most prestigious French champagne houses are having trouble keeping pace with rising demand in the US and emerging markets such as Russia, China and India. Patrick Le Brun, head of the union of champagne vineyard owners, said Britons will be the first to feel the pinch.

### **Under \$39 wines most popular at US eateries**

US restaurants are most likely to feature California wines that sell for less than \$39 a bottle, according to a new report. Start-up research firm Winemetrics LLC released its first annual "On-Premise Wine Distribution Report." Topping the list were Beringer, owned

by Foster's Group Ltd., Kendall-Jackson, and Constellation Brands Inc.'s Robert Mondavi. In fourth and fifth place, respectively: Diageo Plc's Beaulieu Vineyard, also made in California, and UST Inc.'s Chateau Ste. Michelle, made in Washington State.

### **Hoisting a few**

Everything from extreme gluten-free beers will be featured at the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Great American Beer Festival set for Oct. 11-13 in Denver, CO. Tasters can also expect craft, blended, sour, organic and other beers. At last year's festival, there were 450 breweries in the competition with 103 judges from 9 countries. The event is known as the granddaddy of beer fests. •

*The First Press features monthly wine related news selected by roving correspondent and long-time professional journalist, David Wilkening.*

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## *It's a Matter of Taste*