



The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World

Lawrence Osborne

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What is taste? Is it individual or imposed on us from the outside? Why are so many of us so intimidated when presented with the wine list at a restaurant? In *The Accidental Connoisseur*, journalist Lawrence Osborne takes off on a personal voyage through a little-known world in pursuit of some answers. Weaving together a fantastic cast of eccentrics and obsessives, industry magnates and small farmers, the author explores the way technological change, opinionated critics, consumer trends, wheelers and dealers, trade wars, and mass market tastes have made the elixir we drink today entirely different from the wine drunk by our grandparents.

In his search for wine that is a true expression of the place that produced it, Osborne takes the reader from the high-tech present to the primitive past. From a lavish lunch with wine tsar Robert Mondavi to the cellars of Marquis Piero Antinori in Florence, from the tasting rooms of Chateau Lafite to the humble vineyards of northern Lazio, Osborne winds his way through Renaissance palaces, \$27 million wineries, tin shacks and garages, opulent restaurants, world-famous chais and vineyards, renowned villages and obscure landscapes, as well as the great cities which are the temples of wine consumption: New York, San Francisco, Paris, Florence, and Rome. On the way, we will be shown the vast tapestry of this much-desired, little-understood drink: who produces it and why, who consumes it, who critiques it? Enchanting, delightful, entertaining, and, above all, down to earth, this is a wine book like no other.

The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World Details

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From Reader Review The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World for online ebook

Leslie says

This book is a nauseating combination of pretentious and uninformative. I loathed it.

Phil Martin says

This is a great piece of travel writing as well as a good book about wine.

If you enjoy drinking wine and tasting wine but feel a little like you don't get it in the same way as the enthusiasts, this is a great book for you.

Osborne Journeys across Europe tasting, or more accurately, drinking wine with growers and buyers, makers and sellers. It is a journey that has you wondering where you went wrong in life. How is it that some people get to vagabond round the vineyards of Europe, relaxing, eating, experiencing and getting paid for it and you can only read with admiration and envy.

It is a book that made me feel better about the fact that I like wine but couldn't describe the taste of something I drank last week let alone last month and I will probably forget the name of the chateaux but I might recognise the bottle if I saw it again and I would certainly remember that I enjoyed it although I might not know why.

Alina says

I got nervous at first that I needed to know too many of the wine world identities to appreciate this book, but I soon realized that although Osborne meets with all of those people in his book, he is using them simply as the canvass for which to introduce bigger questions about wine.

What is the best bottle of wine? Is it based on the grape, the terroir, the experience you are having while you drink it, etc.

What is taste?

Is there any reason to buy into the Parker categorization (or any other, for that matter)?

And so on.

Great philosophical questions about wine. Such an enjoyable read.

Elizabeth says

Osborne takes readers on a lovely romp around the Western world of wine, most prominently lingering in France, Italy, & California. He blends an interesting amount of history with anecdotes of his own encounters. And he's as down-to-earth as someone writing about elite vineyards and vintages can be. A true delight for

any wine lover.

Rachael says

This book took away my fear of drinking wine (or rather, my fear of not knowing what I'm "supposed" to be tasting), it's fun, easy to read, light on wine technicalities and let me in on the secret that sometimes even wine writers don't understand what they're drinking. Great for the beginning wine enthusiast!

Dayna says

While there were a few sections that made me chuckle, and a few little insights into the wine world, this book wasn't as funny, irreverent, or interesting as I thought it was going to be.

Nat says

The in-the-know thing to say about what a wine tastes like is to say it tastes like "grapes". A couple of the wine makers that Osborne interviews scoff at the language of the wine reviewers and instead use that description.

This is also a kind of critique of the idea of "terroir". Can you really taste the environment in which a wine is produced? In some incredibly indirect sense, but we're hardly discerning enough for its effect to be other than "psychological"---in the sense that one tastes what one expects to taste.

This is a perfect companion to Schwitzgebel's skepticism about our ability to know the qualities of our experiences. The experience of tasting wine is an ideal location for the effects of suggestion, priming and bias of various kinds to be felt. I think I have very little sense of what the wine I drink tastes like (other than grapes---though it doesn't even really taste like that).

Though reading this did make me really want a glass of wine.

stephanie says

The title says it all, sarcastic, hilarious, and lacking pretension; the Accidental Connoisseur is a memorable road trip through the world of wine. You will meet a lot of the big players in the global wine industry, become familiar with the vocabulary of an oenophile; all without the snooty, dryness associated with books on wine tasting. Open a nice bottle and enjoy the journey.

Gerard says

Excellent book on wine that among other concerns tries to winkle out the whys of price/value, the

homogenization of modern wine and just what is tradition anyway. The author is an accomplished, acerbic and witty travel writer and that's shown to good ends here. This is one of the most entertaining (while also pretty merciless) wine books I've read and I look forward to reading the author's other books.

Jeanne Julian says

You pretty much have to be a wine enthusiast to enjoy this book. You'll enjoy his lack of pretension, appreciation of wine and context, and humor. Being a Francophile also would enhance your reading experience. But, I must confess that, months after finishing the book, I find it not that memorable; it left a pleasant taste in my mouth, but I'm not sure why. As the author says about his encounter with the revered Lafite: "I couldn't honestly remember that much about the Lafite. It had been good, but I couldn't go much further."

Melissa says

Think Anthony Bourdain meets the wine world. Clever, witty, intelligent. Osborne's unforgiving British humor combined with his unwillingness to buy into the pretentiousness of the wine industry makes for a laughable but decidedly intriguing read. This is a book for those who love wine but on a "normal consumer" level. He investigates diverse snapshots of the wine industry, including questioning the merits of a Napa Valley "vintner" who has patented software that tells you how (on a chemical level) to create a wine that the critics will score high, the vestiges of the Mondavi and Gallo dynasties, what it's like in Bordeaux for beginners, and wonderfully irreverent side journeys. One warning: keep a dictionary close by because Osborne is either one of the most literate people I've ever read or is very good with a thesaurus.

Elizabeth says

This is one of those well-written journalistic travel books by an author with expertise in a specific field, this time a wine critic rambling through California, Italy, and France. Osborne is a fabulous writer, entertaining and self-deprecating. Some of his turns of phrase are a little exuberant, others require a dictionary, but all in all I enjoyed this book.

One thing that was interesting: Osborne rails on Napa. The town is "Disneyfied," the sunlight "shrill," everything is a copy without sense of history. As a native Californian, I was a little taken aback, but as a Californian traveling through Bordeaux as I read it, I have to admit I can see where he's coming from.

I do think that in a very sly way, Osborne teaches the reader a lot about wine in this book. It's probably a little more than I ever wanted to know, but now I'm curious to taste all those Nebbiolos, Lafites, and Opus 1s. It may take me 80 years to earn enough to pay for a bottle, but who cares. Osborne does a great job of showing how deeply individual wine taste can be; and that much of great wine is simply being in a magical place or drinking with people who you care about.

Jessica Haider says

GoodReads Summer Reading Challenge 2018 task: Read a book about drinks or drinking

Though I prefer mixed drinks, I do sometimes drink wine. I am by no means a wine expert though. This book had some interesting factoids about wine in it and I found it fascinating how there is very much a science to how American vineyards make wine. The book had bits of humor and irreverence throughout (for example, the author referred to the wine in a Catholic mass as "Our Lord's hemoglobin").

Adam says

This was quite the mixed bag for me. I think the best way to review this will be a pros and cons list.

PROS:

- Some wonderful moments where the author delves into the regional history of wine. I enjoyed these moments very much.
- The interviews with the more eccentric winemakers are a treat.
- Luckily, a good amount of the book contains either one or both of the above.

CONS:

- The author himself is... hard to like. The idea of this book seems to be to have a guy who doesn't consider himself to be a connoisseur exploring the wine world. In other words, someone who is humble and without pretension figuring this thing out along with the reader. Unfortunately, he comes off to me as stuck up, judgmental, and somewhat cruel. For someone who supposedly doesn't trust his own taste, he sure does have plenty of negative things to say about lots of wine. He also seems to really hate Americans, or, at least, the influence America has had on wine. He casually grinds that ax a lot.
- Oh my god please stop talking about Robert Parker. I'd really like to read a book about wine that didn't spend such a significant amount of time talking about this dude. I get that he has been an important figure in the wine world, but I'm about tired of hearing aaalllll about him, especially from people who claim to want to move on from Parker style wines. How long has it been, now, since the wine world started claiming that it was moving away from Parker style wines, and towards drinks with more balance and elegance? If this is true, why can't people stop talking about him?
- I think this book could have used a more well defined guiding principal or thesis. It was regularly difficult to want to keep reading, because the book really didn't seem to have all that much to say.
- I think Osborne just wanted to write a sequel to Kermit Lynch's "Adventures on the Wine Route," which is a noble undertaking, but he lacks the knowledge and isn't as charming as Lynch. I learned from Lynch when I read "Adventures." Osborne didn't have nearly as much of value to say.

To put my thoughts into stars, this was a four star book when someone other than Osborne was talking, or when Osborne was writing about history. He was wonderful at that. The rest of the book, unfortunately, was a two star book - mostly frustrating, annoying, and kind of hard to get through. We'll meet in the middle and go with three out of five.

And I'm finally free to read something else.

Donald says

I found this book languishing in the headboard of the bed ... my wife bought it but found it too boring to actually read. The cover has a quote from a Financial Times review - "Possibly the most entertaining book about wine ever written." My conclusion - it is more entertaining to drink wine than to read about it ... Not a bad book - just not that entertaining. A tour through the famous and not so famous wineries of California, France, and Italy. Note that there are many phrases in French and Italian that are not translated. Chritably, I assume that the truly entertaining elements of the book are in these untranslated phrases and hence I missed them ...
