

# Wine A Complete Education



Back-to-school means buying books for the kids. Why not pick up a few wine guides for yourself so you will know if those 2-for-1 supermarket wine specials are really drinkable?

Forget graduation. Learning about wine is never finished because there is always something new. Even sommeliers in upscale restaurants and winemakers at prestigious vineyards must update their knowledge because the world of wine constantly changes.

Attending tastings is the best way to learn what you like and don't like. Once you become a wine lover, though, you may want to take your wine education to the next level — especially if you plan to start a wine collection or if you find yourself in unknown territory when you are looking through hundreds of bottles at the store and not sure which one to buy. How often do you wonder if the \$20 bottle really is better than the \$8?

Selecting a helpful wine book or guide can be just as daunting as buying a good bottle of wine. Over the years, I have amassed a small wine library, and I have bought a few books where the money would have been better spent on a bottle of cabernet. I do have several books that I have reread over and over when I have a question about wine, and I was happy to see them on a recent wine book recommendation list. Although there are hundreds of books about wine, these three classics are still among my favorites:

#### WINDOWS ON THE WORLD COMPLETE WINE COURSE

by Kevin Zraly

The 2001 edition of this book was a gift when I first began studying wines. Zraly has taught for 37 years at the Windows on the World Wine School, considered to be one of the best schools in the nation for wine service staffs. The easy-to-understand style begins with the basics, including his “60-second expert tasting tips” to get the most from wine tasting experiences. If you have questions about grapes, regions, or specific wines, Zraly's book has answers. Seldom do I buy newer editions of books I already own, but *Windows on the World Complete Wine Course* is an exception. The updated versions only get better and better. The 25th anniversary edition retails for \$27.95.

#### GREAT WINE MADE SIMPLE: STRAIGHT TALK BY A MASTER SOMMELIER

by Andrea Immer Robinson

A few years ago, one of the first wine clubs I joined used this book as our guide for tastings. Each chapter features suggested wine tastings to help you understand the “big six” varietals: riesling, sauvignon blanc, chardonnay, merlot, pinot noir, and cabernet sauvignon. Her advice and tips will help you buy wines with confidence. One of the first women master sommeliers, Robinson convinces readers that becoming an oenophile doesn't mean becoming a wine snob. In fact, she doesn't want you to be a snob but rather an educated buyer. I later bought her sequels about pairing wines with food and they, too, are excellent. The hardcover price is \$20.

#### LOVE BY THE GLASS: TASTING NOTES FROM A MARRIAGE

by Dorothy Gaiter and John Brecher

This 2002 book is not so much a guide as it is a heart-warming story about a couple's journey into the world of wine. As young *Miami Herald* reporters they discovered each other and Blue Nun Liebfraumilch, a popular wine of the 1970s. Their tastes evolved and so did their careers. For more than 12 years, they wrote the popular “Tastings” column for the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ). I like to believe my real wine education began with that column. Each week, Gaiter and Brecher gave a little history about varietals or wine regions, and reviewed six or seven budget-friendly to high-end wines. I often took a clip of their WSJ column with me when I shopped for wines. In 1999, the Florida natives created a unique wine holiday called “Open that Bottle Night” on the last Saturday in February, which remains popular with their followers to this day. In 2006, I emailed a description of my “Open that Bottle Night” experience to Dorothy Gaiter and received a personal and inspiring reply. I knew then I wanted to write about wine. The paperback price is \$14.95 or Kindle download is \$11.99.

#### NEXT MONTH:

Wine-related apps for your smartphone or electronic tablets can help you select a bottle of wine you are guaranteed to enjoy.

