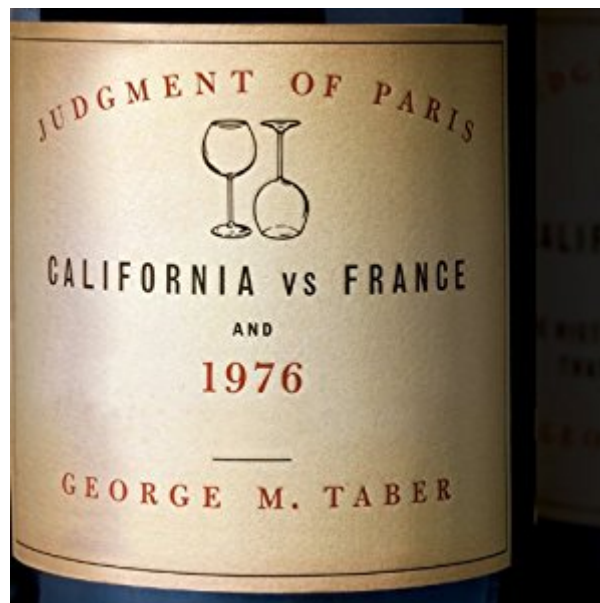




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Judgment Of Paris: California Vs. France And The Historic 1976 Paris Tasting That Revolutionized Wine



Synopsis

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History houses, amid its illustrious artifacts, two bottles of wine: a 1973 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon and a 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay. These are the wines that won at the now-famous Paris Tasting in 1976, where a panel of top French wine experts compared some of France's most famous wines with a new generation of California wines. Little did they know the wine industry would be completely transformed as a result, sparking a golden age for viticulture that extends beyond France's hallowed borders to Australia, Chile, South Africa, New Zealand, and across the globe. Then Paris correspondent for Time magazine, George M. Taber recounts this seminal contest and its far-reaching effects, focusing on the three gifted unknowns behind the winning wines: a college lecturer, a real estate lawyer, and a Yugoslavian immigrant. At a time when California was best known for cheap jug wine, these pioneers used radical new techniques alongside time-honored winemaking traditions to craft premium American wines that could stand up to France's finest. With unique access to the main players and a contagious passion for his subject, Taber renders this historic event and its tremendous aftershocks in captivating prose, bringing to life an eclectic cast and magnificent settings. For lovers of wine and anyone who enjoys a story of the entrepreneurial spirit of the new world conquering the old, this is an illuminating and deeply satisfying tale.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was in the US Navy in Chicago 1975-77. I was also beginning a hobby of collecting wine. After a

trip to Napa Valley I began to pay attention to California wines. In mid-1976 I read an article in the NY Times about a tasting that had occurred in Paris earlier that summer in which 2 California wines, Stag's Leap 1973 CS and Chateau Montelena 1975 Chardonnay had bested a group of respectable French Bordeaux and Burgundy wines. What was particularly striking was the all-French tasting panel. I purchased a case of the 1973 Stag's Leap and enjoyed it over the next several years. I still have two bottles that have been stored under reasonable conditions and will open them one of these days. The account in the Judgement of Paris by George Taber is well-written, factual (as I recall the events) and captures some of the ferment (no pun intended) of 1970s California wine making. It was a different time when it was possible to meet and get to know (for the purchase of a half-dozen bottles of wine) some of the greats. Joseph Swan, Joe Heitz, Warren Winarski, and even Robert Mondavi were accessible with some effort. What a trip it has been. Mr. Taber puts these early days (actually not the early days, but the post prohibition renaissance) in perspective very nicely and captures some of the uncertainty and headiness of those days. I had not read this book before, but enjoyed it very much.

Very well written and very informative not only on the Judgement but also about the process of winemaking. I just started reading it after having come from Napa for the weekend and visiting Stag's Leap, Grgich Hills, Mondavi and others. If you're planning a trip to the area, do yourself a favor and read this book beforehand. You'll go to Napa with your eyes wide open. You'll also probably quit your job, buy a house in Napa and start dabbling in the wine business. This book could cost you millions! OK, kidding. Kind of. Great book.

An excellent read for folks who want to develop an in-depth knowledge of wines and winemaking in the U.S. and France. The author, George M. Taber, has followed this excellent factual documentary text with another great book which I highly recommend. George's next wine book is "To Cork or Not to Cork". It may not sound exciting, but George has done an outstanding job of researching the technology of sealing wine bottles over a rather extended period of time. He points up the issues, the alternatives, the problems, the quality control issues of cork production, and has written an excellent thesis on the move to screw-top technology. For me, this book achieved the remarkable status of being nearly a "Page Turner". Excitement in Corking!!

An expansive history of the development of the modern wine industry in California presented as a set of partial biographical sketches. This approachable and generally unpretentious work gives on a

real taste of the perception and period zeitgeist behind the 'rise' of California 'quality' wines in the 70s and 80s. While it cannot escape its own subjective boundaries, which it certainly 'bumps up against repeatedly, respecting the rational and character of the whole phenomenon, it indulges them gently enough to do no violence to a fairly objective vision of those characters, times and events leading up to the now famous "Judgement of Paris". This volume is a welcome 'reality check' to the rather 'over-the-top' caricature of the motion picture 'Bottle Shock', and gives the casual reader some insight into the reality so entertainingly distorted by the movie's 'Hollywood Treatment' of the principle event around which the story revolves. It's well worth the price and time to read.

I love this book - it gives a wealth of information about the 1970s wine market, the burst of California wines on to the consciousness of the world wine market, and the historic Paris tasting that forever changed how we think about wine. George Taber was the only journalist on hand for the famous tasting, but the tasting results, and his account, made waves around the oenophile community. The book was (loosely) adapted into a fun film called "Bottle Shock", which is enjoyable to watch, but several details were changed in the film to move the narrative.

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