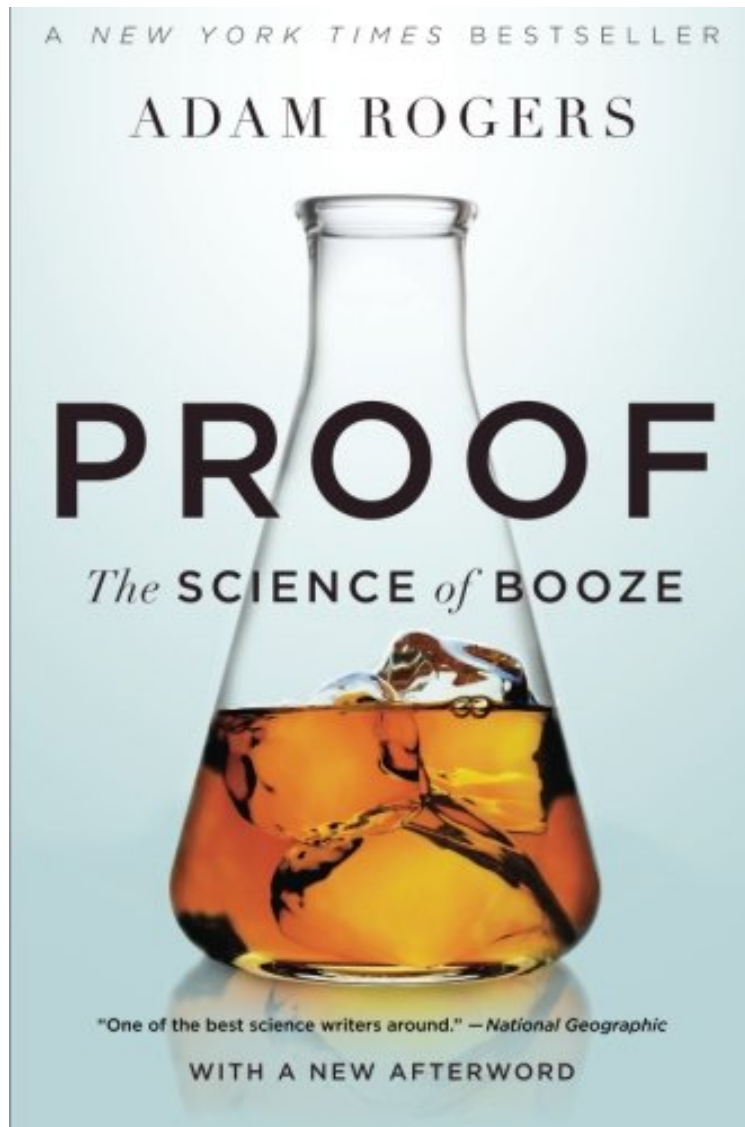


Proof: The Science of Booze

Adam Rogers

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Adam Rogers : Proof: The Science of Booze before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Proof: The Science of Booze:

78 of 79 people found the following review helpful. An entertaining history of alcohol By a scientist Full disclosure: I saw the author give a talk on this subject at a conference about a year ago. The talk was a little better because this author is an outstanding public speaker and merely a very good writer. So, what of the fruits of his labor? Has the author managed to distill the essence of boozy knowledge into a coherent creation or a delirious foment? Well the good news is that this is an entertaining book that is easy to recommend to anyone with even a passing interest in wine, beer,

or spirits. It's written to be read, not used as a reference book. The narrative, such as it is, is loosely organized into chapters that deal with specific facets of booze. Chapter one is about yeast. As a former yeast biochemist, I can say that it was one of the most accessible chapters written on one of my favorite organisms, yet I definitely learned a few things. However, I'm not convinced that everything I learned is absolutely accurate. The book is clearly much better researched than the average blog post but is it up to reference standards? If your reference standard is wikipedia, it probably is. Chapter 2 is another strong chapter about sugar. Chapters 3 and 4 handle fermentation and distillation, and these highlight the weakness of the book's organization: how can you discuss fermentation without discussing yeast? Well, it's hard and it doesn't quite happen. Instead, the author's passion and enthusiasm clouds the narrative and he ends up switching topics so many times that it's hard to follow the thread. The next few chapters are occasionally choppy accounts of aging and smell/taste. The final couple of chapters are all about alcohol's effect on the body and brain, with an entire chapter devoted to hangovers. Much more time is spent discussing getting drunk (how exactly does that work?) and curing a hangover than exploring alcohol's impact on society, whether positive or negative. But what it lacks in comprehensiveness, it makes up for with gusto! Even though I got a little lost in several chapters, it was usually because there were just too many interesting facts to cram in. This book is chock-full of fascinating tidbits of information, including the origins of the term 'bain-marie' (a type of double boiler) with side references to almost everything from British sailors to the Library of Alexandria. Perhaps it's fair to say the mixology on display slowed me down a bit, but didn't really affect my overall enjoyment of this slightly dizzying concoction. It does explain the deduction of a single star, though. This book isn't perfect, but the author's passion and enthusiasm have created a book that's both entertaining and interesting. When it is finally released, I will recommend it to friends and buy at least one copy for my Dad. And if I ever see the author again, I'll buy him a drink.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fun but rambling history of booze research. By Peter Henry While this is touted as a scientific text, it really is far more of a disjointed history of the science of booze. I was totally amused at the end when the writer talks about his editor not wanting a history book, but that he couldn't write what he wanted without historical context. This is an enjoyable romp through alcohol from start to finish, covering many topics - often well intertwined topics. It's organization is sparse, jumping back and forth between subjects sometimes seemingly at random, and it is filled with technical buzzwords. Often the author will have a whole paragraph of synonymous terms for something - not really necessary for a lay text, and while it sounds very CSI sciency, it really doesn't enhance the delivery or information conveyed. There is a lot of solid research and interesting material in here. Making it more condensed would have conveyed that information much more clearly, but would probably have upset the people who want page count. There are many anecdotes from personal interviews, some relevant, some not. The author's need to go into descriptions about the interviewee's dog or similar nonsense is sometimes distracting, but sometimes does help to add flavor to the cocktail. A lot of work went into the glossary and index. Overall, it's a fun book. It's not a science book. You'll get fun facts for use at your next trivia party, but not really much science out of this. I'm really glad I got the low cost Kindle edition. It was well worth \$3, but would have been very disappointing at hardcover prices.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. pathetic semester of human biology By Ashley Anderson I've never appreciated alcohol. I'm an early 90's kid and I can count the 'adult' beverages I've had on one hand. Only a few weeks ago I learned about 'shotgunning' beer. Yeah, I'm that person. Oddly, Proof was just my kind of book. This was a massive information drop on a subject that I have never truly appreciated, and didn't know much about. Rogers writes in journalistic style with enough wit and humor that made it both edgy and entertaining. The book made me thirsty, and as I drank, I began to appreciate alcohol. In the beginning of the book, terminology such as 'amino acids', 'ATP', and 'alleles' were popping up. I began having flashbacks to my one, pathetic semester of human biology. My interest in organic and biochemistry was sparked. Rogers took me into biology labs, distilleries, and fermentation process labs where I experienced the process of booze-making for the first time, the basics of ethanol, the role of 'congeners' (molecules other than ethanol and water in any drink that gives distillates their flavor), and how the mycology of both environment and storage impart the taste and finer flavor to the end-product. Whenever the book seemed to become a bit too dry, Rogers would masterfully become facetious, writing, 'Few three-word phrases inspire less confidence than "according to yelp"; or "23% of people do not get hangovers (the scientific term for them is "jerks")"; it's important to remember that Rogers is not a scientist, but instead a journalist interested in science. The book is serious; it just doesn't take itself too seriously. Rogers impressed me most by projecting the simple way alcohol can and should have a place in life. Most people my age are sots. They have no class. Handling alcohol with style is an instant point of difference the classy have over other drinkers. Rogers makes you want to rise above the "whoever drinks more" competitions, and to become a classy drinker who would never succumb to a thing as trite as peer pressure. I half expected Cary Grant or Humphrey Bogart photographs at the end of the book to assist as representative examples. In the end, Rogers said it best: "People sometimes think science is about discovery. But the action in science, the fun part of doing it (or reading about it), isn't answers. It's questions, the stuff we don't know. Behind every step of the process that produces fermented beverages and then distills those into spirits, there is deep science, with a lot of researchers trying to figure it all out." I'm still trying to figure it

all out. What I do know is that I've been impressed. Rogers's book is a triumph. He has written a fantastic book, and we will have to live with the consequences.

Named a Best Science Book of 2014 by Amazon, Wired, the Guardian, and NBC Winner of the 2014 Gourmand Award for Best Spirits Book in the United States Finalist for the 2015 PEN/E. O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award Lively . . . [Rogers's] descriptions of the science behind familiar drinks exert a seductive pull. — New York Times Humans have been perfecting alcohol production for ten thousand years, but scientists are just starting to distill the chemical reactions behind the perfect buzz. In a spirited tour across continents and cultures, Adam Rogers takes us from bourbon country to the world's top gene-sequencing labs, introducing us to the bars, barflies, and evolving science at the heart of boozy technology. He chases the physics, biology, chemistry, and metallurgy that produce alcohol, and the psychology and neurobiology that make us want it. If you've ever wondered how your drink arrived in your glass, or what it will do to you, Proof makes an unparalleled drinking companion. — Rogers's book has much the same effect as a good drink. You get a warm sensation, you want to engage with the wider world, and you feel smarter than you probably are. Above all, it makes you understand how deeply human it is to take a drink. — Wall Street Journal

Lively . . . [Rogers's] descriptions of the science behind familiar drinks exert a seductive pull. — New York Times One of the best science writers around. — National Geographic Rogers's book has much the same effect as a good drink. You get a warm sensation, you want to engage with the wider world, and you feel smarter than you probably are. Above all, it makes you understand how deeply human it is to take a drink. — Wall Street Journal A great read for barflies and know-it-alls — the grad student who is likely both. — New York Times Magazine In this brisk dive into the history and geekery of our favorite social lubricant, Wired editor Adam Rogers gets under the cap and between the molecules to show what makes our favorite firewaters so irresistible and hard to replicate — and how a good stiff drink often doubles as a miracle of human ingenuity. — Mother Jones A comprehensive, funny look at booze . . . Like the best of its subject matter Proof's blend of disparate ingredients goes down smooth, and makes you feel like an expert on the topic. — Discover A romp through the world of alcohol. — New York Post This science-steeped tale of humanity's ten-thousand-year love affair with alcohol is an engaging trawl through fermentation, distillation, perception of taste and smell, and the biological responses of humans to booze . . . Proof is an entertaining, well researched piece of popular-science writing. — Nature A whiskey nerd's delight . . . Full of tasty asides and surprising science, this is entertaining even if you're the type who always drinks what the other guy is having. — Chicago Tribune Written in the same approachable yet science-savvy tone of other geeky tomes (think Amy Stewart's *The Drunken Botanist* and Brian Greene's *The Fabric of the Cosmos*), Rogers's book sheds light on everything from barrels to bacteria strains. — Imbibe Magazine This paean to booze is a thought-provoking scientific accompaniment to your next cup of good cheer. — Scientist Follow a single, microscopic yeast cell down a rabbit hole, and Alice, aka Adam, will take you on a fascinating romp through the Wonderland of ethyl alcohol, from Nature's own fermentation to today's best Scotch whiskies — and worst hangovers. This book is a delightful marriage of scholarship and fun. — Robert L. Wolke, author of *What Einstein Kept Under His Hat* and *What Einstein Told His Cook* Proof, this irresistible book from Adam Rogers, shines like the deep gold of good whiskey. By which I mean it's smart in its science, fascinating in its complicated and very human history, and entertaining on all counts. And that it will make that drink in your hand a lot more interesting than you expected. — Deborah Blum, author of *The Poisoner's Handbook: Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York* Absolutely compelling. Proof sits next to Wayne Curtis's *And a Bottle of Rum* and Tom Standage's *A History of the World in Six Glasses* as a must-read. — Jeffrey Morgenthaler, bar manager at Clyde Common and author of *The Bar Book* Proof is science writing at its best — witty, elegant, and abrim with engrossing reporting that takes you to the frontiers of booze, and the people who craft it. — Clive Thompson, author of *Smarter Than You Think* Rogers distills history, archaeology, biology, sociology, and physics into something clear and powerful, like spirits themselves. — Jim Meehan, author of *The PDT Cocktail Book* A page-turner for science-thirsty geeks and drink connoisseurs alike, Proof is overflowing with fun facts and quirky details. — *m drunk* — on knowledge! — Jeff Potter, author of *Cooking for Geeks* Adam Rogers writes masterfully and gracefully about all the sciences that swirl around spirits, from the biology of a hangover to the paleontology of microbes that transform plant juices into alcohol. A book to be savored and revisited. — Carl Zimmer, author of *Parasite Rex* and *A Planet of Viruses* Reading Proof feels just like you're having a drink with a knowledgeable and enthusiastic friend. Rogers's deep affinity for getting to the bottom of his subject shines through on every page. — Adam Savage, TV host and producer of *MythBusters* As a distiller I find most books on booze to be diluted. The science and history here are sure to satisfy the geekiest of drinkers. While the chapters, carried by stories, told through

the lens of a rocks glass do not lose the casual. To get this kind of in-depth overview of how spirits are produced, consumed, and studied, you'd have to read twenty books. — Vince Oleson, Head Distiller/Barrel Thief, Widow Jane Distillery "An entertaining read . . . Rogers elegantly charges through what took me more than five years of research to learn . . . Proof will inspire and educate the oncoming hordes who intend to make their own booze and tear down the once solid regulatory walls of the reigning royal houses of liquor." — Dan Garrison, Garrison Brothers Distillery "From the action of the yeast to the blarney of the hangover, via the witchery of fermentation, distillation and aging, Wired articles editor Rogers takes readers on a splendid tour of the booze-making process." — Kirkus's, starred review "Impressively reported and entertaining . . . Rogers's cheeky and accessible writing style goes down smoothly, capturing the essence of this enigmatic, ancient social lubricant." — Publishers Weekly