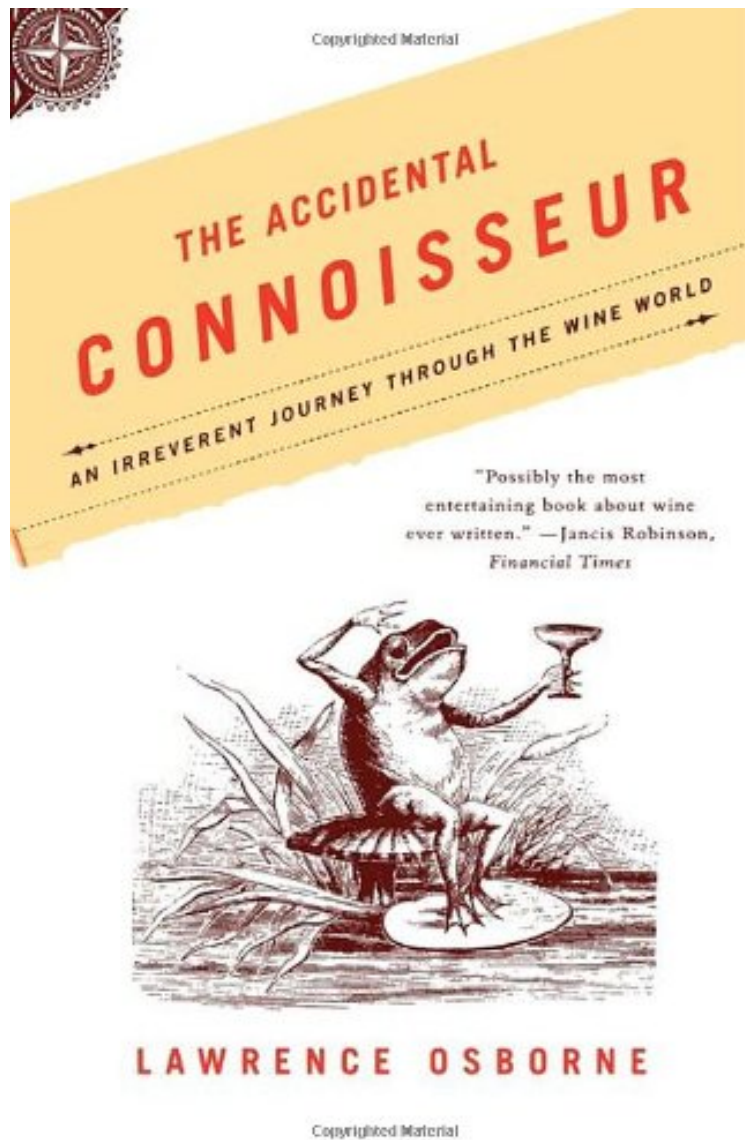


# The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World

Lawrence Osborne

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**Lawrence Osborne : The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Another Fine Book by a Masterful Writer and Stylist By C.

Q. Osborne is simply the best writer I have read in years. His command of language is masterful. All of his books - fiction and non-fiction - rate 5 stars in my opinion. For a general audience, *The Accidental Connoisseur* may be the least appealing because the subject matter is so specific - wine and the people who produce it. Yet for wine lovers at least, the book is a gift. Every sip of wine I have taken since starting to read it has been enriched and enlivened by Osborne's evocative descriptions of vineyards in different parts of the world, the crusty brotherhood of vintners and merchants, and his dogged quest for the mythical "terroir"; that is always just-out-of-reach, but almost there. 18 of 24 people found the following review helpful. What inspired the raves? By Rob Lentini I was disappointed in this book, given some of the rave reviews it has received. I was looking for an entertaining book about enjoying wine. I enjoyed *Bacchus Me more*, and I'm enjoying *Noble Rot* far more, and learning a lot more, too. In some ways, this book plods along as the author goes from interview to interview asking what winemakers and personalities think of terroir... Do they believe in it? Does their wine exhibit it? Should we care about it? But none of the answers really go anywhere and the author never seems to draw a conclusion. Like another reviewer, I felt like the author was showing off his vocabulary. I wish he had shown it off whenever one of his interviewees asked him for his opinion about a wine. His response seemed to be endlessly that he kept his mouth shut and waited to hear what he should be thinking about it. Because the book focuses on ruminations about terroir... It lacks what could be entertaining or interesting stories about where he is... or adventures I could get absorbed in. Brief descriptions of the architecture and how it matched or didn't match the wines, and descriptions of how he got drunk then drove away (deplorable) weren't doing it for me. I wish the author had described how he arranged these tastings, too. When the author moves to Italy, the storytelling improves, and in fact, the author's final stop in Southern Italy to visit an older British woman is quite memorable. The last couple of paragraphs were wonderful and earned an extra star for what was otherwise a dry book about wine. 6 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Pointless and Meandering By A Customer I'll read most any book about wine, but this one truly was ill-conceived and quite literally pointless. Indeed, the author effectively concludes that the whole exercise of the book makes no sense. He admits that he has learned nothing about wine during his "journey" and, hence, conveys nothing. The book also contains a host of factual errors, which were distracting until one reaches the point in the book when one realizes that there really isn't much there for these flaws to detract from - at which point you just let them pass like so much of the author's meanderings. Why was this perhaps workable first draft rushed to print? Why didn't the editors work with the author to craft some type of thesis or framework around the all the disjointed reportage? They could have done some fact-checking while they were at it too. But they didn't. As a result, this book is really half-baked - or, if you will, not nearly fully fermented.

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.

From Publishers Weekly The number of serious wine books published in recent years can be counted on one hand; which makes Osborne's funny and erudite tale all the more welcome. Structured as a traditional quest, it stems from an insecurity of the author's English childhood: "I do not trust my own taste." So he embarks, Quixote-like, on 11 adventures in the wine world, jetting from France to California, then Italy, hoping to plumb the mystery of why someone would spend \$600 on a bottle of fermented grape juice. At every step, Osborne, who's written for the *New York Times Magazine*, *Lingua Franca* and other publications, trains his reporter's eye; previously honed in books like *American Normal*; on both the big picture and telling details. At a comical lunch with viniculture icon Robert Mondavi, Osborne swiftly gets at the importance of his contribution to the industry, while also squeezing in the apt observation that Mondavi's wife, Margrit, reminds him of German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, "at once coquettish and dominant." Despite the miles logged, Osborne's journey is primarily an intellectual one, and his writing will be appreciated by high-minded readers: "Wine is always the lightning conductor of an irrepressible and often iniquitous cosmopolitanism." By the last chapter, Osborne can't say exactly what Chateau Lafite Rothschild tasted like, and he has just encountered the foulest bottle of his life. But he also sounds strangely contented, because he's found the rare

world where aesthetics still matter—;even if the terminology and the people who employ it can be maddening. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Ruminating on the origins of taste, Osborne delves into the current state of the Northern Hemisphere's wine industry. Traveling through Europe and California, Osborne meets both earnest small-vineyard proprietors and powerful wine barons who set the pace for the rest of the industry. Along the way he learns not only the aesthetics of wine but also the economics of it all: how California now sets the standards and how small vineyards prosper only insofar as they position themselves adroitly in the vast worldwide marketplace for wine. The characters Osborne meets are more indelible than zinfandel spilled on white damask: Robert Mondavi, who went to dinner in France and had an epiphany; an Italian nuclear engineer who returned to his family manor, became a vintner, and applied chaos theory to his well-regarded bottlings. But mostly Osborne discovers that taste has succumbed to the exigencies of capitalism's obsession with brands and product synergy. Odd and fascinating facts about wine pepper Osborne's lighthearted yet deeply informed text. Mark Knoblauch Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved. "Funny, provocative, and vastly entertaining." —Gerald Asher "A humorous punch in the nose to wine snobs who think money buys good taste." —Kermit Lynch "Lawrence Osborne's *The Accidental Connoisseur* is shrewd, apt, acerbic and often quite crazy. We are carried along equally by the honed criticism and the fine writing." —Jim Harrison