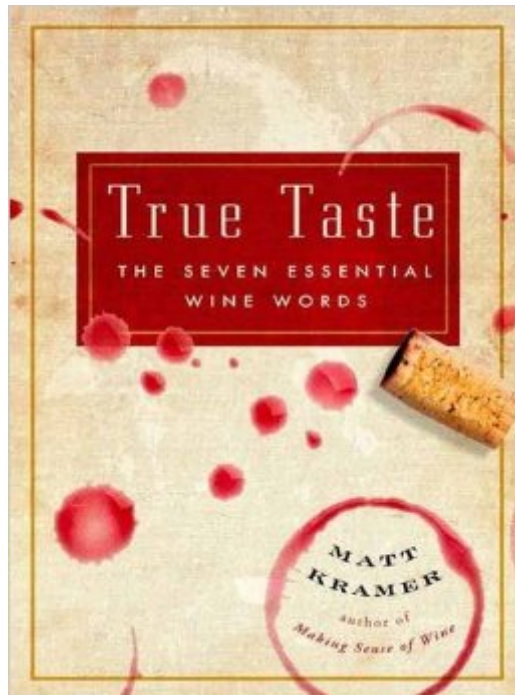


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True Taste: The Seven Essential Wine Words



Synopsis

There's a world of words to describe wine, but only seven you need to know to understand it. Wine is one of the most written about beverages in our history, with dictionaries dedicated solely to the words and phrases used to describe it in the ever-expanding world of self-professed wine connoisseurs. Now, the "great demystifier of wine" (Booklist), highly acclaimed wine expert Matt Kramer, explains in a lucid, accessible and conversational style that there are only seven words that you really need to remember to enjoy wine with anyone.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Matt Kramer's latest book (really not more than a long, concise, finely argued essay) is subversive. While at once a bare knuckled take down of the now well established "flavor-descriptor-as-tasting-note" mode of wine review, True Taste: The Seven Essential Wine Words is also a manifesto for the return to values, judgment and discernment in both wine writing and wine reviewing. And it is a book that every wine writer, every wine industry participant and every true wine aficionado needs to read because it is one of the most important and insightful wine books to be published in the past 20 years. True Taste is the culmination of Kramer's 40 years of writing about wine. And the book reads like something one would need 40 years of drinking wine, tasting wine, evaluating wine, discussing wine and thinking about wine to produce. Those 40 years of experience have provided Kramer with a unique view of a transformation in wine writing and evaluation that he believes has taken us all astray. And he's right. Boiled down, Kramer's

plea is that we move aside the obsession with focusing on flavor identification and descriptors when we evaluate wine because the descriptors actually tell us very little about the quality of the wine or about the most important thing: our judgment of the wine: "Flavors descriptors have nothing to do with judgment. What you can find doesn't necessarily correspond to what you conclude" [Too many tasting notes now offer little more than a string of fanciful flavor descriptors with the judgment revealed only in the score itself "a numerical "thank you ma'am" after the more energetic "slam, bam" of the flavor descriptors.] Kramer is looking for thoughtful judgment in wine reviews.

First I would like to say, I so wanted to like this book, I think Matt Kramer is very talented, and through his essays and other books, has championed the fact that there is more to wine than swirl, sniff, sip, spit and score. That the greatness of a wine, can not be recognized in a snapshot taste among hundreds of other wines with sometimes vastly differing characteristics. Then be categorized and distilled into a few, often vague or oddly overly specific, descriptive phrases, assigned a score and forgotten. Sadly this "book" falls short (pun intended) of this in several ways. First, is it even a book? It is very small, both in stature 8"x6" and length 99 pages of standard type, from preface to footnotes. Of those pages, 29 are either chapter title page, 2 per chapter, or blown up quotes from the text you are reading, so essentially blank. That leaves the reader with 70 small pages, which in a more standard format, would I think come to less than 50 pages. Is that worth \$19.00 (cover price)? I would say this is less, a small book and more, a long pamphlet. But, you say maybe Matt drilled into this subject of taste and got to the root, and therefore could get the point across with fewer words, it's right there in the title you only need 7. Sorry but that isn't the case, what you get is a short series of recycled platitudes with no specifics, complaints about wine reviewing with no offer of solutions, and an attack on one kind of doctor (chemists) using an other (psychologists). My last and biggest issue with True Taste is it smacks of elitism.

I've always adored Kramer's writing for its unique balance of erudition and lack of pretense. Kramer isn't a critic, he's a wine writer, and spends his time looking for meaning rather than adjectives in every glass. Kramer doesn't seek flavors, but something more fundamental in what makes wine great. He offers his seven wine words in the vein of the Platonic Solids, shapes that were thought at the time to be the fundamental building blocks of the universe. Insight, Harmony, Texture, Layers, Finesse, Surprise, and Nuance. These are the characteristics that Kramer suggests should form the fundamentals of any judgement about wine. Wines either have them, or they don't, says Kramer,

and the best wines have got them all. But even more to the point, Kramer suggests that once you understand these elements of wine, they're pretty much all you need to fully understand and appreciate it, which may be a welcome message to many who will never pick up the Oxford Companion or The Wine Bible. Indeed, this book seems pitched at a very different audience than those two reference books, likely to already be in the possession of serious wine aficionado. Kramer's little book may be best for the wine timid -- those who enjoy wine and are slightly embarrassed by how little they know about it (which describes a large portion of my friends, and yours, most likely). These folks will find a combination of solace and inspiration in Kramer's book, starting from its very premise. The individual essential words that Kramer has selected are beautifully elucidated and explained, in ways that make them both approachable, but also profound.

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