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**by Ed McCarthy, Mary Ewing-Mulligan,  
Maryann Egan, Tony Aspler, and Barbara Leslie**



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# Introduction

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**W**ine is easy to love: It tastes great, offers a fascinating range of flavors, and brings people together — at the dinner table and elsewhere. Everyone can enjoy wine, regardless of experience or budget.

Yet despite the pleasure it brings, wine can also be a source of anxiety. After all, you have to know strange names of grape varieties and foreign wine regions *and* be able to figure out whether to buy a \$20 wine or an \$8 wine that seem to be pretty much the same thing. You even need a special tool to open the bottle after you get it home!

All this complication surrounding wine will never go away, because wine is a very rich and complex field. But you don't have to let the complication stand in your way. With the right attitude and a little understanding of what wine is, you can begin to buy and enjoy wine. (And if you decide that wine is fascinating, you can find out more and turn it into a wonderful hobby!) *Wine All-in-One For Dummies* exists to help you feel more comfortable around wine by providing you with some basic wine knowledge.

Ironically, what will *really* make you feel comfortable about wine is accepting the fact that you'll never know it all — and that you've got plenty of company. You see, after you really get a handle on wine, you discover that *no one* knows everything there is to know about wine. There's just too much information, and it's always changing. And when you know that, you can just relax and enjoy the stuff!

## About This Book

Here, within one bright yellow-and-black cover, is a wealth of wine information. But don't let the book's impressive heft intimidate you; everything on these pages is lighthearted and straightforward — easy to digest, even. (Excellent, perhaps, with a crisp Sauvignon Blanc.)

Use this guide as a reference, opening it whenever you want to answer a question, revisit advice, or find recommendations for matching wine with a meal. The page you flip to is up to you; this isn't a typical, read-from-cover-to-cover kind of book. It's designed to be at the ready whenever you feel the urge to find out more about all things wine.

Please note that a book can't provide the most up-to-date pricing (especially when its readers may be shopping anywhere from San Francisco to Tanzania), so you might find that the prices here vary from those you find in your local wine shop. Use the prices provided as a rough estimate; if a wine is included at about \$20, you might find it for \$15 or \$25, but you probably won't see it for sale for \$100. Call your local wine merchant to find out exactly what a bottle is going for. The excellent Web site [www.wine-searcher.com](http://www.wine-searcher.com) also can help nail down prices in any currency.

## Conventions Used in This Book

Following are a few helpful conventions used throughout *Wine All-in-One For Dummies*:

- ✔ *Italics* are used to provide emphasis, highlight new words or terms being defined, indicate certain foreign or scientific words, and point out specific words or phrases on a wine label. They also indicate the stressed syllable in a pronunciation (if no syllable is italicized, all syllables carry equal weight).
- ✔ *Monospace* is used for Web addresses.
- ✔ Sidebars, which are shaded boxes of text, consist of information that's interesting but not necessarily critical to your understanding of wine.

## Foolish Assumptions

Before we put this book together, we had to make some assumptions about who you, its reader, might be. We assume that you

- ✔ Know very little about wine but have a strong desire to find out more.
- ✔ Know something about wine, perhaps more than most people, but want to understand the subject better, from the ground up.
- ✔ Are already very knowledgeable about wine but realize that you can always discover more.
- ✔ Don't have a lot of ego invested in wine — or maybe you do and you're buying this book “for your sister-in-law.”
- ✔ Are someone who prefers straight talk about wine over a lot of mumbo jumbo and jargon.

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## ***How This Book Is Organized***

*Wine All-in-One For Dummies* is a wine user's manual and a reference book, all in one. It includes very basic information about wine for readers who know nothing (or next to nothing) about wine, but it also features tips, suggestions, and more sophisticated information for seasoned wine drinkers who want to take their hobby to a more-advanced level. Here's a quick guide to what you can find where.

### ***Book I: Understanding Wine***

This book is the grapevine, so to speak, of *Wine All-in-One For Dummies*. It's raw material to the other chapters' finished, delectable bottles. Here you find out about how grapes become wine, and you get all the practical information you need to confidently buy, serve, taste, and store wines that strike your fancy. You also get some guidance on pairing wine with food, a feat that can be delicious or disastrous depending on the combination you use.

### ***Book II: France: A Wine Superstar***

French wines are a vast and confusing field — especially for people who don't speak French, who are accustomed to seeing wines named after grape varieties (which most French wines aren't), and who live an ocean away from the regions where French wines grow. Book II breaks down these barriers for you, taking you region by region through France's wine production.

### ***Book III: Italy: Small but Mighty***

Italy is one of, if not *the*, most exciting wine countries on earth. The quality of Italy's wines has never been higher, and its range of wines has never been broader. Nor have more types of Italian wines ever been available outside of Italy. Although Italy's wines are more desirable and more available than ever, they're no more comprehensible. In fact, the proliferation of new wines and new wine zones has made Italian wine an even more confusing topic than it has always been. This book straightens all that out for you.

## ***Book IV: California and Elsewhere in North America***

You probably drink California wine already; wines from California are the top-selling wines in the United States. Could you find other wines from California — other grape varieties, other tastes — that you might enjoy even more than what you already know? Probably. And Book IV takes you through the greats of California, as well as wonderful wines from other areas of North America.

## ***Book V: Australia and New Zealand: Powerhouses of the Southern Hemisphere***

Australia and New Zealand have really started coming into their own, wine-wise; in fact, Australia now produces more wine than all but five other countries. Each year, the wines get better, and those at the lower end of the price spectrum continue to surprise critics; at the higher end, the wines just get more complex, subtle, and alluring. Turn to this book to glimpse the exciting wine regions of Australia and New Zealand, touring the dominant wine-production areas and getting recommendations for bargains, splurges, and more.

## ***Book VI: And More Wine Regions!***

Book VI presents a mix of Old World wine countries (such as Spain and Germany) and New World stunners (such as Chile and South Africa). Turn here to explore the beauty of classics such as Portuguese Port and German Riesling and the excitement of electrifying flavors such as Argentine Malbec and South African Pinotage.

## ***Icons Used in This Book***

Throughout *Wine All-in-One For Dummies*, icons guide your eye to certain tidbits within the text. Here's a rundown of the kind of information each icon highlights:



Some issues in wine are so fundamental that they bear repeating. We mark the repetitions with this symbol.



Wine snobs practice all sorts of affectations designed to make other wine drinkers feel inferior. But you won't be intimidated by their snobbery if you see it for what it is. (And you can discover how to impersonate a wine snob!)



This odd little guy is a bit like the 2-year-old who constantly insists on knowing "Why, Mommy, why?" But he knows that you may not have the same level of curiosity that he has. Where you see him, feel free to skip over the technical information that follows. Wine will still taste just as delicious.



Advice and information that will make you a wiser wine drinker or buyer is marked by this bull's-eye so you won't miss it.



There's very little you can do in the course of moderate wine consumption that can land you in jail — but you could spoil an expensive bottle and sink into a deep depression over your loss. This symbol warns you about common pitfalls.



Unfortunately, some of the finest, most intriguing, most delicious wines are made in very small quantities. Usually, those wines cost more than wines made in large quantities — but that's not the only problem. The real frustration is that those wines have very limited distribution, and you can't always get your hands on a bottle, even if you're willing to pay the price. Such wines appear next to this icon; here's hoping that your search proves fruitful!

## Where to Go from Here

Itching to find an earthy Zinfandel for dinner tonight? Book IV is here to help. Boning up on the great wine regions of France? Dig into Book II. If you're hoping for help in choosing the most efficient corkscrew, Book I has what you need.

Start wherever you like. *Wine All-in-One For Dummies* is designed so you can jump to whichever section most interests you at whatever moment you pick it up. Of course, overachievers or the intensely curious are welcome to keep turning pages from here to the back cover.

Cheers!

