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Wine

FOR

DUMMIES®

4th Edition

Ed McCarthy
Certified Wine Educator

Mary Ewing-Mulligan
Master of Wine

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Wine
FOR
DUMMIES®
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by Ed McCarthy
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and

Mary Ewing-Mulligan
Master of Wine



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About the Authors

Ed McCarthy and **Mary Ewing-Mulligan** are two wine lovers who met at an Italian wine tasting in New York City's Chinatown and subsequently merged their wine cellars and wine libraries when they married. They have since co-authored six wine books in the *Wine For Dummies* series (including two of their favorites, *French Wine For Dummies* and *Italian Wine For Dummies*) as well as their latest book, *Wine Style* (Wiley); taught hundreds of wine classes together; visited nearly every wine region in the world; run five marathons; and raised eleven cats. Along the way, they have amassed more than half a century of professional wine experience between them.

Mary is president of International Wine Center, a New York City wine school that offers credentialed wine education for wine professionals and serious wine lovers. As U.S. director of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET®), the world's leading wine educational organization, she works to make the courses she offers in New York available in more and more parts of the United States. She is also the long-standing wine columnist of the *NY Daily News*. Mary's most impressive credential is that she's the first female Master of Wine (MW) in the United States, and one of only 22 MW's in North America (with 251 worldwide).

Ed, a New Yorker, graduated from City University of NY with a master's degree in psychology. He taught high school English in another life, while working part-time in wine shops to satisfy his passion for wine and to subsidize his growing wine cellar. That cellar is especially heavy in his favorite wines — Bordeaux, Barolo, and Champagne. Besides co-authoring six wine books in the *For Dummies* series with Mary, Ed went solo as author of *Champagne For Dummies*, a topic on which he's especially expert.

Ed and Mary also share wine columns in *Nation's Restaurant News* and in *Beverage Media*, a trade publication. They are each columnists for the online wine magazine, *WineReviewOnline.com*. Ed and Mary are both accredited as Certified Wine Educators (CWE).

When they aren't writing, teaching, or visiting wine regions, Mary and Ed maintain a busy schedule of speaking, judging at professional wine competitions, and tasting as many new wines as possible. They admit to leading thoroughly unbalanced lives in which their only non-wine pursuits are hiking in the Berkshires and the Italian Alps. At home, they wind down to the tunes of U2, K.D. Lang, Bob Dylan, and Neil Young in the company of their feline roommates Dolcetto, Black & Whitey, Ponzi, and Pinot.

Authors' Acknowledgments

The wine world is dynamic — it's constantly changing. Because three years have passed since the third edition of *Wine For Dummies*, we decided to revise and update the book. We especially felt an obligation to write this fourth edition because of all the readers who have personally told us how valuable *Wine For Dummies* has been to them. We are grateful that we've been able to contribute to your knowledge about this wonderful beverage.

But this book would not have been possible without the team at Wiley. We sincerely thank Publisher Diane Steele, who engaged us to write the fourth edition of *Wine For Dummies*, along with Acquisitions Editor Stacy Kennedy. Really special thanks go to our Project Editor, Traci Cumbay, who made excellent suggestions to improve the text.

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Introduction



We love wine. We love the way it tastes, we love the fascinating variety of wines in the world, and we love the way wine brings people together at the dinner table. We believe that you and everyone else should be able to enjoy wine — regardless of your experience or your budget.

But we'll be the first to admit that wine people, such as many wine professionals and really serious connoisseurs, don't make it easy for regular people to enjoy wine. You have to know strange names of grape varieties and foreign wine regions. You have 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 once 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, like us, you decide that wine is fascinating, you can find out more and turn it into a wonderful hobby.

Because we hate to think that wine, which has brought so much pleasure into our lives, could be the source of anxiety for anyone, we want to help you feel more comfortable around wine. Some knowledge of wine, gleaned from the pages of this book and from our shared experiences, will go a long way toward increasing your comfort level.

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

If you already have a previous edition of *Wine For Dummies*, you may be wondering whether you need this book. We believe that you do. We wrote

Wine For Dummies in 1995, and the world of wine has changed a lot since then. It has even changed since our third edition in 2003:

- ✔ Dozens of wineries have opened, a few have gone out of business, many have improved, and a few have slipped. Web sites on wine have come and gone. The wine auction scene bears almost no resemblance to what it was. Our recommendations reflect all these changes.
- ✔ Remember those prices that we listed for your favorite wines in our earlier editions? Well, big surprise: Just about all those prices have increased. But we point out some bargains, especially in Parts III, IV, and V.
- ✔ Several new vintages have occurred; we give you the lowdown on them throughout the book, and especially in our vintage chart in Appendix C.
- ✔ Great wine regions of yesterday, such as Spain, Hungary and Greece, have revitalized themselves, and we tell you about them. Also in this edition, we've updated the wine regions of Italy, California, Washington, Chile, and Argentina, among others.

We wrote this book to be an easy-to-use reference. You don't have to read it from cover to cover for it to make sense and be useful to you. Simply turn to the section that interests you and dig in.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate this book, we've established the following conventions:

- ✔ *Italic* is used for emphasis and to highlight new words or terms that are defined.
- ✔ `Monofont` 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 the topic.

Foolish Assumptions

We assume that you picked up this book for one of several reasons:

- ✔ You know very little about wine, but have a strong desire to learn more.
- ✔ You do know something about wine, more than most people, but you want to understand it better, from the ground up.

✔ You're already very knowledgeable but realize that you can always discover more or want to see whether we've made any mistakes so that you can brag to your friends that you caught us in a flagrant error. (Maybe you think that a particular vintage in Bordeaux wasn't nearly as good as we said, for example.)

We also assume that you 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.” And we assume that you are someone who doesn't appreciate a lot of mumbo-jumbo and jargonistic language about wine, and that you're someone who wants straight talk instead.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is a wine textbook of sorts, a user's manual, and a reference book, all in one. We've included very basic information about wine for readers who know nothing (or next to nothing) about wine — but we have also included tips, suggestions, and more sophisticated information for seasoned wine drinkers who want to take their hobby to a more advanced level. Depending on where you fall on the wine-knowledge gradient, different chapters will be relevant to you.

Part I: Getting to Know Wine

The five chapters in Part I get you up and sipping even if you've never tasted wine in your life. We tell you the basic types of wine, how to taste it, which grapes make wine, why winemaking matters, and how wines are named.

Part II: Wine and You: Up Close and Personal

This part deals with practical wine matters — in the wine shop, in the restaurant, and in your home. Find out how to handle snooty wine clerks, restaurant wine lists, and those stubborn corks. In addition, we show you how to decipher cryptic wine labels.

Part III: The “Old World” of Wine

Visit this part for a tour of the major wine regions of Europe: France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, and Greece.

Part IV: Discovering the New World of Wine

Here we adventure to Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, and South Africa, and then take a look at the major wine areas in the United States — California, Oregon, Washington, and New York — and end with a quick look at Canada's wines.

Part V: Wine's Exotic Face

Some of the most exciting and fascinating wines are in this part, including Champagne, Sherry, Port, Sauternes, and other exotic dessert wines.

Part VI: When You've Caught the Bug

You find a wealth of practical advice in this part, including recommendations on where and how you can buy wine beyond your local wine shops. We tell you how to describe and rate wines you taste, and how to pair food and wine. We also tell you how to store wine properly, and how to pursue your love and knowledge of wine beyond this book.

Part VII: The Part of Tens

What *For Dummies* book would be complete without this part? It's a synopsis of interesting tips and recommendations about wine to reinforce our suggestions earlier in the book. We're particularly happy to debunk ten prevalent myths about wine so that you can become a savvier consumer and a more satisfied wine drinker.

Part VIII: Appendixes

In Part VIII, we show you how to pronounce foreign wine words, and you can look up unfamiliar wine terms in our glossary. You can also consult our vintage chart to check out the quality and drinkability of your wine.

Icons Used in This Book



This odd little guy is a bit like the two-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 that 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.



Some issues in wine are so fundamental that they bear repeating. Just so you don’t think that we repeated ourselves without realizing it, 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 learn how to impersonate a wine snob!)



A bargain’s not a bargain unless you really like the outfit, as they say. To our tastes, the wines we mark with this icon are bargains because we like them, we believe them to be of good quality, and their price is low compared to other wines of similar type, style, or quality. You can also interpret this logo as a badge of genuineness, as in “This Chablis is the real deal.”



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. We mark such wines with this icon, and hope that your search proves fruitful.

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