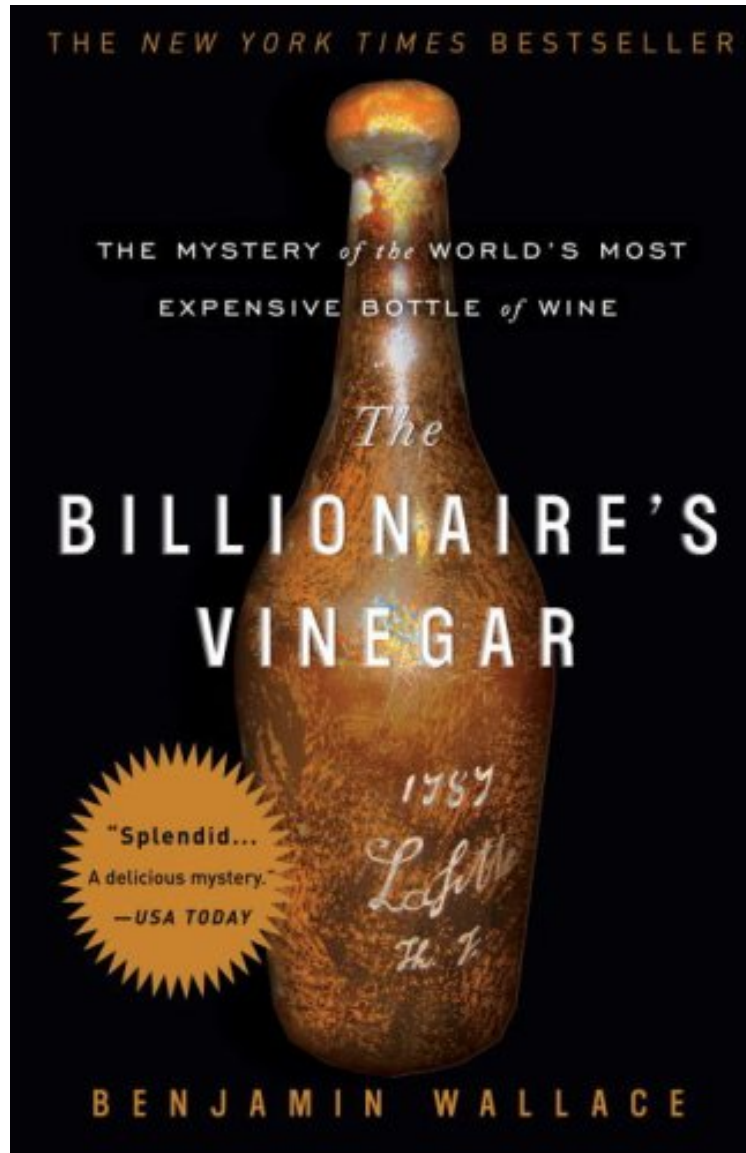


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Benjamin Wallace

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#17130 in Books Benjamin Wallace 2009-04-14 2009-04-14 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .70 x 5.20l, .58 #File Name: 0307338789323 pages The Billionaire s Vinegar The Mystery of the World s Most Expensive Bottle of Wine | File size: 38.Mb

Benjamin Wallace : The Billionaire's Vinegar: The Mystery of the World's Most Expensive Bottle of Wine before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Billionaire's Vinegar: The Mystery of the World's Most Expensive Bottle of Wine:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. "In May 1945, when allied forces liberated Hitler's mountaintop redoubt in Bavaria, they found half a million bottles of wine." By Mary Whipple Could the bottle of Lafite, with the initials of Thomas Jefferson and dated 1787, awaiting auction at Christie's in London in 1987, possibly have been part of a newly discovered Nazi hoard? As Michael Broadbent, the head of the wine department of Christie's, prepared to auction off this bottle, the oldest authenticated bottle of red wine ever to come up for auction at Christie's, he knew that it would become the most expensive bottle of wine ever sold. Parts of the Old Marais district in Paris had recently been torn down, and some wondered if the bottle was found walled up in a basement. Others suggested that it had a Nazi history. Then again, Thomas Jefferson had sent hundreds of cases of wine home to Monticello when he left his job as Minister to France, and one of these cases may have been lost or stolen. Speculation was rife because of the age and importance of this bottle, not just for its qualities as wine but also because of its historical importance. The bottle had been consigned to Christie's by Hardy Rodenstock, a German wine collector who refused to say exactly where it had come from, revealing only that it was from a hidden cellar in an unidentified 18th century house in Paris. The cellar supposedly contained a hundred bottles, two dozen of which, all from 1784 - 1787, were engraved with the initials "Th.J." After a bidding war, Kip Forbes, son of publisher Malcolm Forbes, was declared the winner with a bid of \$156,000. Questions began to arise about this bottle almost immediately. There was no evidence that Jefferson had ever purchased a 1787 Lafite, and in fact, Jefferson had recorded the purchase of only two of the four wines that Rodenstock had found. The engraving style on the auctioned bottle had never before been used by Jefferson, and all the other Rodenstock wines had exactly the same engraving style. "It seemed odd [too] that whoever first found the bottles would not have shopped them to the highest bidder, instead of automatically selling to Rodenstock." As several more of the Jefferson bottles came up for auction over the next couple of years, each one setting a new record, questions continued to arise about the bottles themselves, the amount of evaporation, and ultimately, even the instruments used to engrave the bottles. Unusually, at every tasting Rodenstock sponsored, his men secured the corks and sealing wax after the bottles were opened, and no one had access to them for testing purposes. In the second half of the book, author Benjamin Wallace takes the reader from 1987 to the present, detailing the new techniques which can now be used (and were later used on the Jefferson bottles) to date bottles, wine, sediments, engraving, wax, and corks. High tech labs, with experts on everything from tests for germanium, thermoluminescence, carbon, and lead, create a fascinating story of how the wine market has evolved to the present and the safeguards now in place to prevent fraud of this nature. Benjamin Wallace keeps the excitement high as he details the search for information about the Jefferson wines and the eventual outcome regarding their "rightness." Well researched and filled with details about the wine industry, the book bears reading now, in light of recent decisions in the lawsuits brought by William Koch and the auctioneer, Michael Broadbent. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An awfully good portrait By J. Hundley As a non-drinker who couldn't tell a Haute-Brion from Martini and Rossi, I still found myself intrigued by the premise here and so I thought it would be a good, entertaining read. And indeed it is. A crazy-quilt of eccentrics people the world of collectable, rare wine. From the way more money than sense types who pay upwards of 20K for a bottle of something they don't actually have any idea of what it will taste like, to the haughty taste-maker / experts who's nod or frown determine such things, there is no end of curious individuals on display here. But distant as this world may be to you, or at the very least, me, there is much to recognize here in the way of human nature: greed, deceit, wishful thinking, hubris, dissembling, decadence, foolishness, and one-upsmanship on a grand scale. Wallace delves deeply into the mysteries of the "Jefferson" bottles and their fabricated history. The story is compelling, highly-readable and full of twists and turns that lead from dusty, 18th Century cellars to modern physics laboratories. All along the way, Wallace makes the action (or in some cases, inaction) comprehensible and entertaining. Lots of reviews here, and most of them positive. All add my voice to chorus. A fine, engaging read. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A must read for any real wine snob. By Simon S. I'm a wine snob, I admit it. This was a great read. I love wine but more so I love reading about the secrets of the industry. This book focus on a niche market of ultra old, incredibly rare and outrageously expensive wines sold, auctioned and traded from the late 70's through the mid 90's. The main focus is one individual who always had an unlimited supply of these old wines. The books also focuses on some of the key players involved with this individual. I don't want to divulge to much info here, just read the book!

The rivetingly strange story of the world's most expensive bottle of wine, and the even stranger characters whose lives have intersected with it. The New York Times bestseller, updated with a new epilogue, that tells the true story of a 1787 Chteau Lafite Bordeaux supposedly owned by Thomas Jefferson that sold for \$156,000 at auction and of the eccentrics whose lives intersected with it. Was it truly entombed in a Paris cellar for two hundred years? Or did it come from a secret Nazi bunker? Or from the moldy basement of a devilishly brilliant con artist? As Benjamin Wallace unravels the mystery, we meet a gallery of intriguing players from the bicycle-riding British auctioneer who speaks of wines as if they are women to the obsessive wine collector who discovered the bottle. Suspenseful and thrillingly strange, this is the vintage tale of what could be the most elaborate con since the Hitler diaries. Part detective story, part wine history, this is one juicy tale, even for those with no interest in the fruit of the vine. . . . As delicious as a true vintage Lafite. BusinessWeek

From Publishers Weekly The titular bottle, from a cache of allegedly fine, allegedly French wine, allegedly owned by Thomas Jefferson in the 1780s, set a record price when auctioned in 1985. The subsequent brouhaha over the cache's authenticity takes wine journalist Wallace on a piquant journey into the mirage-like world of rare wines. At its center are Hardy Rodenstock, an enigmatic German collector with a suspicious knack for unearthing implausibly old and drinkable wines, and Michael Broadbent, a Christie's wine expert, who auctioned Rodenstock's lucrative finds. The argument over the Jefferson bottles and other rarities aged for decades, flummoxed a wine establishment desperate to keep the cork in a controversy that might deflate the market for antique vintages. (In the author's telling, a 2006 lawsuit almost settles the issue.) Wallace sips the story slowly, taking leisurely digressions into techniques for faking wine and detecting same with everything from Monticello scholarship to nuclear physics. He paints a colorful backdrop of eccentric oenophiles, decadent tastings and overripe flavor rhetoric (Broadbent describes one wine as redolent of chocolate and schoolgirls' uniforms). Investigating wines so old and rare they could taste like anything, he playfully questions the very foundations of connoisseurship. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Bookmarks Magazine Benjamin Wallace's magazine background helps him keep the many narrative threads in *The Billionaires Vinegar* tight and engaging. In addition, Wallace exhibits a sharp eye for detail and character: Hardy Rodenstock, in particular, comes across as deliciously deceptive. Exploring what Jefferson's European tour of 1787 must have been like will likely interest even readers without a taste for wine, though connoisseurs will savor the author's descriptions of the clubby (and sometimes comically extravagant) society of high-dollar wine collectors. Wallace raises questions about the wines' authenticity that will linger on the palate, despite a perhaps unsatisfying ending. Or, as collector Ed Lazarus wrote of his experience with the discovered cache, I had never experienced anything remotely similar in an older Bordeaux, or in fact anywhere else, except perhaps at a Baskin-Robbins. Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc.

From Booklist Wallace takes readers into the closed society of collectors of fine wines, a world restricted to wine experts and the superrich. He focuses his story on the remarkable 1985 auction that saw a price record set for a unique bottle of old wine that had at one time apparently been destined for the cellars of Thomas Jefferson. Wallace recounts Jefferson's stay in prerevolutionary France, where the American soaked up French culture and journeyed to Bordeaux to arrange export of a few cases of claret to his Monticello home. Skipping to the present era, Wallace profiles Michael Broadbent, whose estimable palate and keen business sense have made him the world's preeminent evaluator and auctioneer for large collections of fine wines all over the world. The ease with which shady characters have infiltrated this marketplace with substandard and counterfeit wines makes for a cautionary tale. --Mark Knoblauch