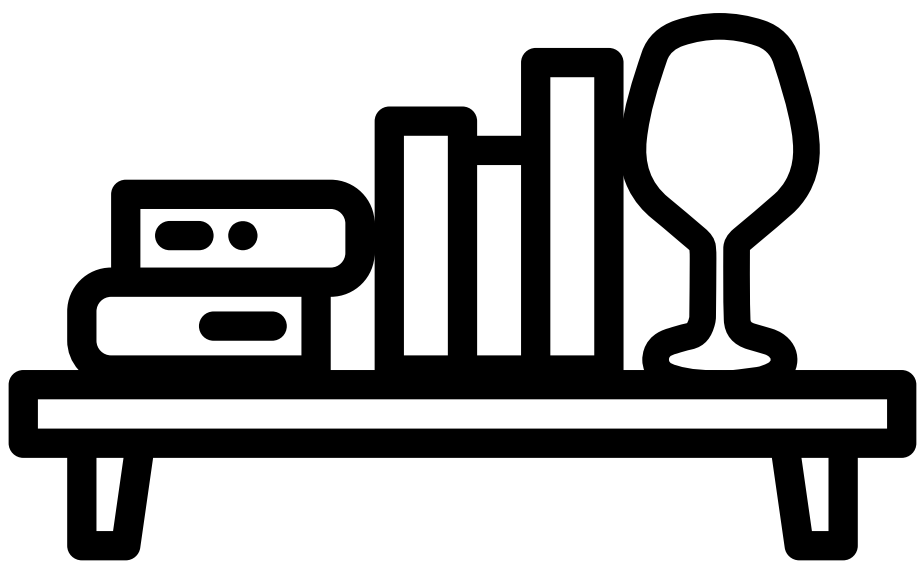


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BURGUNDY VINTAGES: A HISTORY FROM 1845

BY ALLEN D. MEADOWS AND DOUGLAS E. BARZELAY

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Allen Meadows you know well through his Burghound publications, and our events here in China at each year's The Fine Wine Experience Burghound Symposium. He has built up 40 years' experience as a Burgundy specialist taster, combining that with a heavy investment in time and shoe leather talking in vigneron's cellars, walking the vines, understanding terroir. Although there have been some "deep dives" into back vintages of certain key wines in Burghound reports and Pearl of the Côte, for many years now Allen has been saving up the motherload of his research and understanding of the time dimension of Burgundy – for this book.

The result is a landmark book in its ambition and its execution. A book like this could not be written by a more qualified pair of writers for such a task. Of the co-author, Douglas E. Barzelay, it would be fair to say that no one alive today has more experience in or understanding of old Burgundy wines than him.

Doug combines the acute mind of a successful lawyer, with a real passion for the "sweetness of age" in Burgundy. Meeting with Doug at gatherings to share bottles, the joke, when he might offer you a taste of an "'06" would be to reply "yes Doug, but which century?" I owe many of my opportunities to taste, and to learn about older Burgundy to him. He enjoys the hunt, and he enjoys sharing bottles. But, as you will see in the book, he parses this pleasure away from his objective assessment of the wine in the glass. Drink a 1929 with Doug and he would have the experience to know if it was 'refreshed', fully original, adulterated, would share with you something of the context of the domaine or negociant at the time it was made, and how this bottle of 1929 compares with many many others. Both Allen and Doug are incisive tasters, and I am pleased to see that where they have tasted together, both tasting notes appear in the book.

What is particularly gratifying however is just how layered and rich this book is.

On one level, the book can be delved into as a reference, to understand a snapshot in time – what was a particularly vintage like, what do these wines taste like today? In this respect the book is remarkably comprehensive. There's vicarious pleasure in reading through the notes from the 19th century, but as we move toward recent vintages the book transforms into a very practical vintage reference with tasting notes on key wines included. Woven in to this chronology of bottles tasted however is the history. You could just as easily pick this book up and read it as a 170 year history of a place. How as a wine producing region Burgundy has adapted to social and economic change, dealt with major crises such as phylloxera, and pre-mox are given as much weight in the book as the vintages and wines themselves. The 586 pages leave us with a rich tapestry to read, and an invaluable resource to dip into when we want to understand a more specific point in time – be that, say, the style of 1964 as a vintage, or how farming practices changed in the 1950s – or pan out to gain a sense simply of how Burgundy got to where it is today.

Allen D. Meadows and Douglas E. Barzelay Burgundy Vintages: A History from 1845 is destined to become one of the most well-thumbed books in The Fine Wine Experience library, and we are delighted to have it in our hands.

