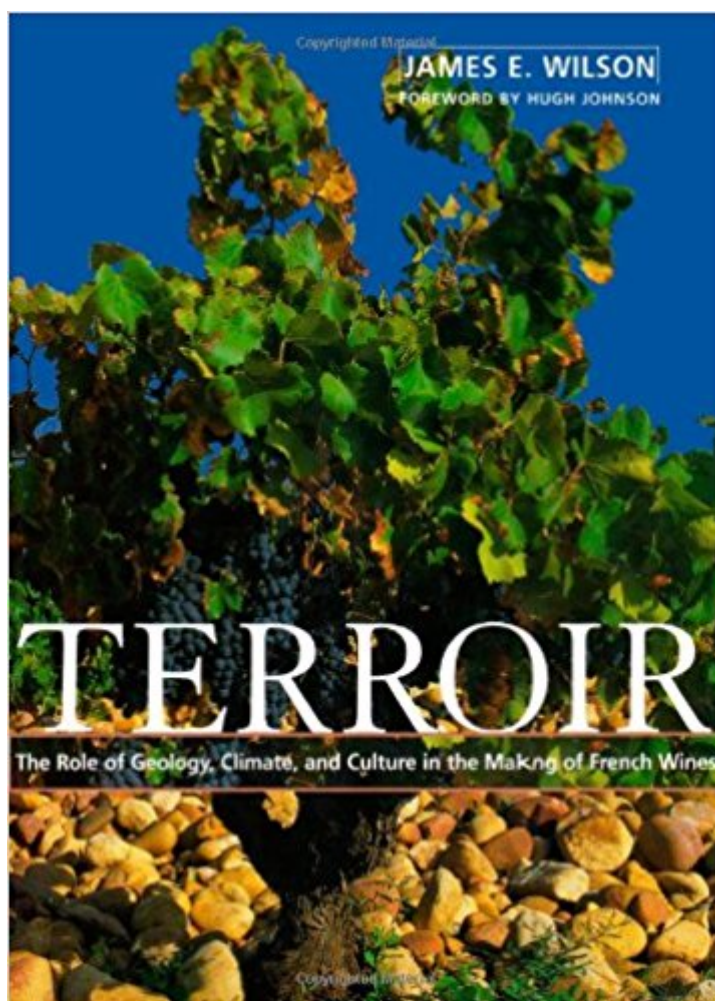


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# Terroir: The Role Of Geology, Climate, And Culture In The Making Of French Wines (Wine Wheels)



## Synopsis

The French word *terroir* is used to describe all the ecological factors that make a particular type of wine special to the region of its origin. James E. Wilson uses his training as a geologist and his years of research in the wine regions of France to fully examine the concept of *terroir*. The result combines natural history, social history, and scientific study, making this a unique book that all wine connoisseurs and professionals will want close at hand. In Part One Wilson introduces the full range of environmental factors that together form *terroir*. He explains France's geological foundation; its soil, considered the "soul" of a vineyard; the various climates and microclimates; the vines, their history and how each type has evolved; and the role that humans--from ancient monks to modern enologists--have played in viticulture. Part Two examines the history and habitat of each of France's major wine regions. Wilson explores the question of why one site yields great wines while an adjacent site yields wines of lesser quality. He also looks at cultural influences such as migration and trade and at the adaptations made by centuries of *vignerons* to produce distinctive wine styles. Wilson skillfully presents both technical information and personal anecdotes, and the book's photographs, maps, and geologic renderings are extremely helpful. The appendices contain a glossary and information on the labeling of French wines. With a wealth of information explained in clear English, Wilson's book enables wine readers to understand and appreciate the mystique of *terroir*.

## Book Information

Series: Wine Wheels

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Wine Appreciation Guild; 1 edition (September 8, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1891267221

ISBN-13: 978-1891267222

Product Dimensions: 7.5 x 0.8 x 10.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #639,627 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Wine & Spirits > Champagne](#) #100 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Wine & Spirits > Wine Pairing](#) #580 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Wine & Spirits > Wine](#)

## Customer Reviews

James E. Wilson is a former Vice President for Exploration and Production at Shell Oil. In his second career he has devoted himself to the study of the natural history and underlying geology of French wines. He lives in Colorado. Hugh Johnson writes the annual best-seller, *Pocket Wine Book* and is also author of *World Atlas of Wine*, now in its fourth edition.

Hugh Johnson has inked quite a few good books on wine, including his autobiography, "A Life Uncorked" and the repeatedly revised and updated "World Atlas of Wine" -- the latter having launched many folks on a life-long love affair with all things vinous and/or a career in the wine business. "Terroir," however, was written by James E. Wilson, a geologist and former engineer and executive for Shell Oil. Hugh Johnson penned the foreword to Wilson's book. HUGH JOHNSON IS NOT THE AUTHOR. What makes this book unique is that it offers the perspective of a scientist/geologist who is also a passionate amateur of wine. You might also want to take a look at Jacques Fanet's "Great Wine Terroirs," published in French in 2001 and in translation by the University of California Press in 2004. However, Wilson's book is a more detailed, interesting and groundbreaking work than Fanet's. Below is a review of the book I originally posted on November 6, 1999, for another entry for the same book that properly identified the author. Nothing has changed in the past decade: My shelves groan beneath the weight of scores of new and ancient volumes on French wine, and glitzy new volumes come and go from the catalogs every year -- but this one is somewhat unique among them. James Wilson is a geologist. He also loves French wine. Put the two together and you get this fascinating book about the geology, climate and viticulture of the major wine regions of France, all the way from Alsace to Languedoc. Filled with maps, photos and cross-sections, the book gives you an excellent visual picture of the topography and geology of the great (and not so great) vineyards. There is a glossary of terms for the geologically impaired, although you might still want to run out and get a basic geology text or dictionary to help you slog through the thicker parts of this book. Persevere, and you will gain a deeper understanding of the ways the ineffable term 'terroir' can account for the very different characteristics of wines from vineyards that may be no more than a stone's throw from one another. The same 'terroir' concept explains why the wines of the Loire, Rhone, Champagne, and all of the other major French viticultural regions have evolved as they have -- and why sacrificing their uniqueness to a homogenized 'international style' would be such a tremendous loss. If you love wine, this book will grab your attention.

Excellent book, excellent condition...thank you

This is a GREAT book on the famous lands of France, but it is NOT written by Hugh Johnson....  
JAMES WILSON is the author!

This book allows one to understand why micro geography is as important to the making of a great wine as weather and the wine maker.

Wilson's book contains numerous un-substantiated comments and many factual errors, it is also breathtakingly condescending to the reader. The regional information is poorly balanced, with very little geological data on large areas of France, notably, Provence and the Rhone.

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