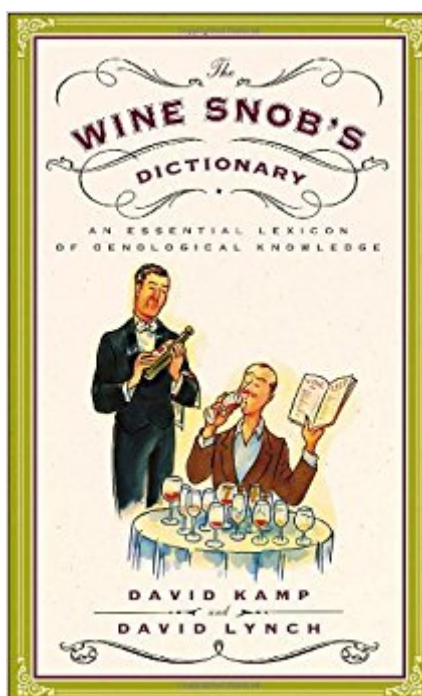


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The Wine Snob's Dictionary: An Essential Lexicon Of Oenological Knowledge



Synopsis

A nicely structured, lightly acidic addition to the handy Snobâ™s Dictionary series, decoding the baffling world of winespeak from A to Z. Wine Snob. The very phrase seems redundant, doesn't it? When faced with this snobbiest of snobberies, the civilian wine enthusiast needs the help of savvy translators like David Kamp and David Lynch. Their Wine Snobâ™s Dictionary delivers witty explication of both old-school oeno-obsessions (What's claret? Who's Michael Broadbent?) and such new-wave terms as "malolactic fermentation" and "fruit bomb." Among the other things Kamp and Lynch demystify: Finish: the Snob code-term for "aftertaste." (Robert Parker includes the stopwatch-measured length of a wine's finish in his ratings.) Meritage: an American wine classification that rhymes with "heritage," and should NEVER be pronounced "meri-TAHJ." Terroir: that elusive quality of vineyard soil that has sommeliers talking of "gunflint," "leather," and "candied fruits" Featuring ripe, luscious, full-bodied illustrations by Snob's Dictionary stalwart Ross MacDonald, The Wine Snobâ™s Dictionary is as heady and sparkling as a vintage Taittinger, only much less expensive... and much more giggle-inducing. Cheers!

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Customer Reviews

DAVID KAMP is a writer and editor for Vanity Fair and the author of The United States of Arugula, The Food Snobâ™s Dictionary, The Film Snobâ™s Dictionary, and The Rock Snobâ™s Dictionary. DAVID LYNCH is a James Beard Award-winning writer, sommelier, and restaurant manager, having served as wine director of Babbo Ristorante for seven years. Both authors live in

New York City. ROSS MACDONALD's illustrations have appeared in many publications, from The New Yorker to The Wall Street Journal.

The Wine Snob's Dictionary symbol indicates a Wine Snob Vanguard item, denoting a person, an entity, or a concept held in particular esteem by Wine Snobs.

Aaron, Sam. Revered New York wine merchant (1912-1996) who was the chief evangelist behind Sherry-Lehmann Wine and Spirits, the landmark Upper East Side shop owned by his family. In partnership with his older brother Jack, who purchased the shop shortly after the repeal of Prohibition, Sam, a trained psychologist and protege of FRANK SCHOONMAKER, shepherded in the era of upper-middle-class American wine connoisseurship, writing florid, proto-J. Petermanesque copy for Sherry-Lehmann's catalog and enlisting American-food guru James Beard as a fellow copywriter and sometime in-store greeter. If it weren't for ol' Sam Aaron, bless him, we'd all still be drinking rum toddies and backyard moonshine.

Acidity. Crucial, fairly self-explanatory component of STRUCTURE in wine; the cause of the palate-puckering tartness that either excites or repels the Snob taster, depending on whether said Snob is a devotee of more measured, traditional wine styles or a hedonistic guzzler of FRUIT BOMBS.

Aerator. Unnecessary status gadget, often fashioned of crystal, that hastens the process of getting a wine to "open up," obviating the arriviste Snob's need for patience or traditional decanting. Most aerators require the user to awkwardly and cumbersomely hold them over a glass while wine is poured through them. Many aerators pass themselves off as objets d'art to justify their steep prices, though they generally resemble the sort of whimsical "folk art" sold by rich men's wives in resort-town gift shops.

Ah So. Generic term for a two-pronged wine-bottle opener that, given that it isn't technically a screw-pull device, is better described as a "cork extractor" than a corkscrew. The Ah So's user slips one prong between the cork and the bottle, and then the other, rocking the opener back and forth until it shimmies down the length of the cork. Classicist Snobs prefer the Ah So to such devices as Metrokane's chic, expensive Rabbit corkscrew because it grips the cork from its sides rather than the middle, an especially valuable trait with old, wet, quick-to-crumble stoppers that cling stubbornly to the interiors of aged trophy bottles.

Appellation d'Origine Controllee (AOC). Strict, government-regulated classification system used in France since the 1930s to delimit the geographical origins of the country's more prestigious wines (as well as certain Franco-exalted foods, such as cheese). Despite the phrase's literal translation as "controlled appellation," the rules determining which wines qualify for AOC status have been assembled with all the clarity and consistency of tax code--a circumstance exploited by Snobs and Frenchmen, who count on the system's impenetrability to retain mystique and keep novitiates out of the Snob club. AOC

appellations extend beyond mere geography, functioning as prescriptions for all facets of production: the types of grapes used, the allowable grape yields, and even winemaking and aging techniques.

Asher, Gerald. Authentically writerly wine writer, British-born but spiritually and physically based in the Bay Area, where, like ROBERT FINIGAN, he served as a firsthand witness to the Napa-Sonoma grapequake. A refugee from the midcentury London wine trade, where he bucked BROADBENT-ian mores by focusing on France's less hoity-toity, better-value wines, Asher found himself Stateside in the early 1970s and found his metier as the wine sage of *Gourmet*, a role he holds to this day.

Attack. Martial term deployed by machismo-minded Snobs to describe the first impression a wine makes as it storms the sensory beach that is one's palate. Used especially in reference to the sweetness that is naturally picked up by receptors on the tip of the tongue. The attack on the '99 Chambolle was an intense blast of ripe, round, red fruit, followed by a generously proportioned mid-palate and a long, lingering finish of East Asian spices and beechwood smoke.

Balance. The quality achieved in a wine when its fruit, ACIDITY, alcohol, and TANNIN are all in good proportion to one another. While a reasonably straightforward term, especially by wine-talk standards, balance nonetheless sounds obtuse or off to the non-Snob ear, somehow evoking strange images of balloon glasses fitted with calipers.

Barnyard. Counterintuitively positive adjective for wines with a pronounced earthiness; the Wine Snob analog to the Food Snob term *lusty*. There's a healthy dose of barnyard funk on the nose of this Echezeaux.

Barrel tasting. Literally, a sampling of a wine drawn directly from the barrel in which it is aging; socially, a means by which wine critics and other professionals may flaunt their access and avidity. While it is common for the winemaker himself to sneak a peek of a wine as it matures in its oak vessel, the better to keep tabs on its evolution and quality, it's a more rarified occasion for the non-winemaker, who prizes the experience as much for its me-firstness as for the insight it provides. The 2005, which I had occasion to try at a barrel tasting with Jean-Michel this past spring, promises to be one of the greatest releases of the last twenty-five years from this fabled chateau.

Barrique. A 225-liter oak barrel used to age wine. In the olden days of winemaking, a wood barrel was simply a vessel in which to transport wine, but after it was realized that oak imparts pleasing flavors and textures to wine, barriques--especially new ones custom-built from French oak--became the ultimate symbol of vintnerific sophistication. Depending on a Snob's persuasion, barrique aging is either a glorious source of oak-derived notes of vanilla, PAIN GRILLE, and toffee (progressive modernist with a second home in Sonoma) or a vile abomination (aging classicist who publishes his own newsletter).

Bead. Winespeak term for the bubbles in a glass of Champagne, which are purported to string together into a beadlike formation--ideally, a formation that is daintily delicate (the smaller the bubbles, the better) and

persistent (the bubbles should still be snaking upward as you take your last sip). The mature, straw-gold color of the '95 Krug was accentuated by a lovely, finely woven bead and a nose of baker's yeast and Seckel pears.

Betts, Richard. Dreamy, swishy-haired, new-paradigm MASTER SOMMELIER who serves as the wine director at the Little Nell, a swank Aspen inn and resort. The antithesis of the imperious, TASTEVIN-wearing sommelier of yore, Betts, a mountain biker and trained geologist, exudes a hempy, Perry Farrell-ish looseness and cultivates envy among year-round restaurant floor-patrollers by not only overseeing a GRAND AWARD-winning list but also enjoying a six-month-long off-season during which he makes private-label wines in France, Australia, and elsewhere.

Biodynamics. Intense, holier-than-organic farming movement inspired by the lectures given in the early twentieth century by the philosopher and education innovator Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). The ethos of choice for Wine Snobs who think that even the organic movement has gone too corporate, Biodynamics is based on the concept of the farm as a self-sufficient, mixed-use organism dependent on the interrelations of the realms animal, mineral, vegetable, and, indeed, cosmological. (Adherents believe that interplanetary relations play a role in healthy plant growth.) Though the French dominate biodynamie discourse as it relates to wine, thanks to such noisy testifiers as Nicolas Joly in the Loire Valley and Chapoutier in the Rhine, the movement is increasingly embraced by progressivists and infrequent bathers the world over.

Bohr, Robert. Wunderkind member of the celebrity-sommelier constellation who established himself at Cru, a New York City restaurant that became an instant Snob mecca when it opened in 2004. A Francocentrist despite his New Jersey roots and English-yobbo appearance, Bohr has adeptly cultivated wealthy collectors and assembled a wine list of such breadth that it takes up two massive leather-bound volumes. Known in Snob circles for his fetish for trophy wines in large-format bottles, which he conspicuously totes around at industry events, dispensing pours to colleagues he deems worthy.

Botrytis cinerea. Pesky fungus that arises in wet, humid conditions, destroying wine grapes or, in controlled circumstances, concentrating their sugar by sapping them of water. In this latter scenario, Botrytis infection is known as "noble rot," a phrase trotted out by plummy connoisseurs of expensive dessert wines like Sauternes and TBA (Trockenbeerenauslese). Still, Botrytis blight is generally a nuisance to most winemakers and is even the cause of a rare respiratory ailment known as winegrower's lung.

Breed. Supremacist-redolent term used in describing a wine of obviously ritzy pedigree--a wine whose luxurious, refined personality indicates to its knowing appraiser that it is the product of an aristocratic vineyard site, such as a Grand CRU in Burgundy or a First Growth in Bordeaux. The finely grained tannins, the deep core of cassis fruit, and the exceptionally long and perfumed finish all mark this effort as a wine of great breed.

Brett. Abbreviation for *Brettanomyces*, a

strain of yeast that, when present in wine, causes the wine to smell metallic and taste a bit "off"; usually indicative of less-than-ideal sanitary conditions in a winery. Though professional winemakers are the ones most likely to notice and correctly identify brett, the term is increasingly heard issuing forth from the mouths of sommeliers at industry tastings, often as they attempt to throw competitors and prosperous civilian interlopers off guard. Eiuww, I'm getting a little brett on this Cab.Brick. Visual descriptor associated with older red wines, which lose color intensity as they age. A wine's passage from RUBY to brick is usually brought about by slow, controlled oxidation over time and is oft the subject of lyrical commentary by Snobs, akin in their minds to a faithful dog's passage from vigorous stick-chaser to gray-muzzled layabout. Less lyrical, however, are those occasions when a young wine comes off as brickish, in which case the consternated Snob complains that he has some defective JUICE on his hands.

Broadbent, Michael. Droll, prolific, trilby-wearing British wine writer of John Gielgud-ish mien and imposing stature, having long served as the head of the wine department at Christie's and having written the most authoritative books on vintage wines. Adored by Snobs for the voluminous handwritten notes he has kept in red, schoolboy-style exercise books since the 1950s and for his utter lack of concession to the mores of the ROBERT PARKER era--in a typically Broadbentian utterance, he has decreed that today's "supermarket wines . . . are for drinking, not for writing about."

Burghound. Quarterly newsletter and, in recent years, corresponding Web site run by autodidact wine enthusiast Allen Meadows--like ROBERT PARKER, a refugee from the white-collar ranks (Meadows was the CFO for Fidelity National) who turned his hobby into an enterprise. Focusing exclusively on Burgundy, whose unpredictable wines have historically attracted the most obsessive and masochistic of Wine Snobs, Meadows is respected even by know-it-all Snobs for his ability to parse the region's hopelessly complex network of small producers and tiny vineyards. Buy up all the '05 you can now; it's been tipped as the best vintage ever by Mr. Burghound himself.

Cap. The crust of grape skins and other solids that forms atop a vat of fermenting red wine. Cap-related ministrations inordinately excite the wonkiest of Wine Snobs, who are familiar with the complementary processes of "punching down" (pushing the cap back down into the liquids to impart color, flavor, and TANNIN) and "pumping over" (pumping juice from the bottom of the tank and spraying it on top of the cap).

Cassis. French word for "black currant" and the liqueur made from same, employed in TASTING NOTES and reviews as the go-to sensual identifier for Cabernet Sauvignon. More experienced Snobs, having mastered this term, then graduate to such advanced Cab descriptors as "bilberry" and "mace." The '82 Mouton is still showing beautifully, its saturated ruby color still intact along with its dense, youthful flavors of cassis and chocolate.

Cellar management. Newfangled "service" marketed to serious collectors, in which a wine merchant or

expert oversees the assembly and maintenance of a client's cellar: ensuring that certain wines are stashed away for aging, that bottles are properly tagged, that the storage conditions are good, that the collection is sufficiently balanced between wine regions and types, etc. A uniquely first-world and unnecessary result of dot-com and hedge-fund wealth. Our trained and well-traveled team offers a varied portfolio of cellar management solutions.

Chateau Cheval Blanc. Bordeaux estate in Saint-Emilion whose wines are a slightly offbeat target of Snob adulation--the Thelonious Monk to Chateau Margaux's Miles Davis. Lush and generous when young, Cheval Blanc, which has an unusually high percentage of the Cabernet Franc grape in its blend, has a fervent cult whose members consider its 1947 vintage to be the greatest wine ever made. My most recent tasting of the '47 Cheval Blanc showed it to be very much alive, almost portlike in its intensity.

Chewy. Ordinary adjective put to hyperbolic use when applied to wine, suggesting that the JUICE in question is so dense that it requires actual mastication. The big, chewy tannins on this Zin have got me jonesin' for a steak!

Cigar box. Improbable Snob tasting term, commonly applied to deep, dark reds of the Cabernet family--Franc especially, but also Sauvignon. Lovely aromas of black currant and cigar box carry through to the long and harmonious finish.

Claret. Quaint term for a red Bordeaux, still used in England (especially by MICHAEL BROADBENT) and revived in recent years by such American producers as Francis Coppola and Su Hua Newton, who trot out "claret" even though their wines aren't from Bordeaux.

Clarke, Oz. Bald, English, Oxford-educated, relentlessly chipper pocket-guide specialist who took up wine-writing as a second career after his West End acting career got stuck in idle. While not taken terribly seriously by Snobs, given his multimedia ubiquity and penchant for writing portable, softcover books, Clarke was prescient in recognizing the potential of Australian wines, so much so that many novice Snobs labor under the misimpression that he is, in fact, from OZ.

Clendenen, Jim. Falstaffian California winemaker whose Robert Plant mane, floral-print shirts, and dude-ular bonhomie have established him as the face of the laid-back, communal Central Coast, the region affectionately portrayed in *Sideways*. In addition to running the winery Au Bon Climat, Clendenen is also a well-traveled seeker with several Burgundy quests under his belt (Burgundy being the favored destination for spiritual Wine Snob questers; see also BURGHOUND), and his Burgophilia shows in his wines, which incite Paul Giamatti-worthy soliloquies from critics.

Climat. Wine-talk diminutive of TERROIR, used to denote the siting of a particular vineyard. Similar in meaning to CRU, but considerably more precious in conversation. To my mind, no other climat delivers wines with the velvety textures of Richebourg.

Closed. Utilitarian descriptor for any wine that doesn't seem to be giving all of itself, with no immediate suggestions of lychees, huckleberries, or what have you. In younger wines, a synonym, more or less, for TIGHT; in

older wines, a sadder, more resigned term, denoting a wine that will never realize greatness, its fruit and aromatics smothered by a tannic towel. Cocks and Feret. Titter-inducing shorthand for the so-called Bordeaux Bible, *Bordeaux and Its Wines*, a reference book whose first edition was published in France in 1850 (as *Bordeaux et ses vins, Classes par ordre de merite*) by an Englishman, Charles Cocks, and a Frenchman, Michel Feret. Historically significant as the template for the 1855 CLASSIFICATION, upon which Bordeaux classifications are still based, "Cocks and Feret" is linguistically significant for sounding like an especially filthy piece of Cockney rhyming slang.

Who would want to? If you find Oenology somehow interesting but also ridiculous and pretentious at the same time then this is the book for you. It's obvious, but for reviewing purposes I'll just state that this book isn't for wine snobs, but rather pokes fun at them while being informative and witty at the same time. It's a delightful read, the first few pages I glanced at online were enough to let me know that this was the book I was searching for.

The book is helpful, there is no doubt there. However, it focuses on personalities and descriptive terminology with little to no coverage on wine regions or varietals.

This book and its companion were exactly what I was looking for! THANKS!!! Will definitely look to them for purchases again in the future!

This is definitely a fun but accurate book. It provides quick and easy education regarding wine. It is by no accident that the author presents a "snobby" tone, but this is part of the fun. Witty and worthwhile.

this is a very informative and enjoyable read for anyone who enjoys wine and or just to learn about the drink

I gave this book as a gift with the Vinturi wine aerator. I looked thru it & if you're new to wine it is helpful if you take the time to read it. Good conversation piece.

I just ordered this book for my son who will soon be graduating from college. He loves wine and is just learning as well as being in a very progressive and affluent social group. I think this book looks

great! Hope he is not offended by the title "sob" !!! :)

Really enjoyed this almost-back-pocket-sized guide to wine snob minutia. The authors do a great job of introducing lots of obscure wine terminology (and wine personalities) while poking fun at wine snobs and neophytes alike. Take this gem, for example: Spoofalated. Scornful term invented by old-line winemakers to describe any wine so bombastic and overmanipulated by man--usually via excessive oak usage, but sometimes by way of overripeness or MICRO-OXYGENATION--that it lacks any discernible VARIETAL character. Ex. "I couldn't bring myself to tell Dad that the Chilean wine he so proudly gets by the case from Costco is a ghastly, overbearing, spoofalated grape beverage." Highly recommended!

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