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J. STEPHEN CASSCLES: *Grapes of the Hudson Valley and Other Cool Climate Regions of the United States and Canada*. Flint Mine Press, Coxsackie, New York, 2015, ISBN 978-0-520-9825208-3-3, \$29.99.

The Hudson Valley is in many ways the birthplace of viticulture in America with a grape-growing history that extends back to the 1600s. Its wine-growing history is full of pioneering efforts in grape cultivation and hybridization. The home of the oldest commercial winery in the United States (Brotherhood Winery, 1839), it is a beautiful and fruitful valley with many similarities to European wine regions, especially those of Germany like the Rhine Valley. With its southern border just 20 miles from the George Washington Bridge, the region is in close proximity to the huge wine market of New York City. It is one of the three major wine-growing regions of New York State, which also includes the Finger Lakes and eastern Long Island. In this book, Casscles succeeds better than any other in describing the many facets of grape growing in the region and how its past can be a guide toward a promising grape-growing and wine-making future largely through close examination of interspecies hybrid grapes and other cool-climate varieties.

The author writes with first-hand knowledge of the grape-growing and wine industry in the Hudson Valley. He has been growing grapes there since the 1970s, meticulously observing and managing many grape varieties. His helpful insights are excellent practical guides for the grape grower of cool-climate grapes. He also has been a winemaker for a commercial winery in the region since 2008. Casscles is a government attorney for the New York State Senate and has authored more than

22 laws related to the production, distribution, and sale of alcoholic beverages. His extensive background in law and grape growing provides the framework for his clearly written and well-referenced history of the region and description of the grapes grown and the wine made there.

This 250-page paperbound book is quite attractively composed and intelligently assembled. The black print is of easily legible font size, and there are topics and headings in shades of red, which enhance and distinguish sections and subsections. Black-and-white drawings, photos, and illustrations of important historical figures, grape varieties, and grape-growing and harvesting scenes are among the many pleasing visual items that help transport the reader through the past several centuries of grape growing in the Hudson Valley. There are 27 color photos grouped toward the middle of the book that feature the mature grape clusters of 23 important hybrids as well as four stages of grape growth. There are two useful maps placed prior to chapter 1, which show the fruit-growing areas of the Hudson Valley and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cold hardiness zones of New York State. An innovative section on how to use the book is also available to the reader prior to chapter 1. In this section, the author introduces a clever icon system, which helps the reader quickly recognize five important characteristics of the grape described. These characteristics include winter hardiness, fungal disease resistance, vigorousness, productivity, and wine quality. Descriptors such as harvest dates and winter hardiness are specifically related to the Hudson Valley.

Hybridization is key to developing grapes that are best fitted to the environment, and no one understands or explains this better than Casscles who devotes an entire chapter to the concepts and benefits of hybridization. He states: “As the Earth’s global population continues to grow ... the development of new genetically superior grape varieties and agricultural crops will be critical in enhancing the ecological and economic well-being of the human race worldwide” (p. 21). This book is an outstanding and fascinating description of the history of grape hybridizing. It includes histories of the early (1875–1925) and late French hybridizers, the pioneering hybridizers of the Hudson Valley, the Geneva hybridizers, and those from the successful Minnesota program. Highly detailed descriptions of the parentage of the grape hybrids are included as well as the author’s thoughts on the best techniques for managing the variety and its potential for the Hudson Valley and similar climates.

As a grape grower in the mid-Atlantic region, I am primarily a grower of *Vitis vinifera* varieties, but I am also familiar with and grow hybrid varieties and appreciate their contributions to cool-climate viticulture. In viticulture, “hybrid varieties” are generally considered crosses between species (e.g., *Vitis vinifera* × *Vitis riparia*). In a broader sense, all grape varieties are hybrids in that they readily crossbreed among varieties and even in the wild can cross between species. In my opinion, too much emphasis is placed on whether wine is made from a hybrid variety, and not enough emphasis is placed on the taste of the wine and the sustainability of growing the grape. With his excellent descriptions of the wine taste and the capabilities of growing the grapes and producing the wine in the Hudson Valley, Casscles’s

book allows the reader to focus on these important concepts like no other book. He does cover the *Vitis vinifera* varieties that may be successful in the region, such as Grüner Veltliner and Lemberger, and “classic” varieties, such as Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, but he is careful to emphasize that “the cultivation of grapes should not be a static pursuit that allows only for the propagation and growing of a few select ‘classic’ grape varieties such as Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Riesling” (p. 208).

Besides serving as a review of grape growing in the Hudson Valley, the book makes original contributions with its extensive research of the history of grape growing in the region. The sections on grape hybridizers include their intentions, methodologies, and results and are among the best I have seen on these topics. There are several chapters of value as introductions to the reader unfamiliar with grape growing or wine making. Chapter 3, “Basic Principles of Cold Climate Pruning and Vineyard Management,” is an excellent chapter with great illustrations. Chapter 5, “The Principles of Winemaking,” is a short primer on wine-making fundamentals. There are useful notes at the end of each chapter as well as an extensive bibliography, an index of major and minor grape varieties, and a general index.

This book will be a pleasure to read not only for anyone with an interest in growing grapes or enjoying the wine of the Hudson Valley, but also for those who want to understand about the history of grape growing in the region or the development of the hybrid grapes and the hybridizers who developed them. It should also interest those who wish to explore this part of the diverse world of wine and all of its nuances. Other recent books on grapes and wines of New York and the East, which may be of interest, include Hudson Cattell’s *Wines of Eastern North America* and Richard Figiel’s *Circle of Vines: The Story of New York Wine*. One useful book I highly recommend to the grower of grapes in the East is the *Wine Grape Production Guide to Eastern North America* by Tony Wolf et al. (2008). No book, however, will replace *Grapes of the Hudson Valley* for its ability to describe the importance of that region as the birthplace of viticulture in the United States as well as to direct attention to the region’s present and future in sustainably growing quality wine grapes.

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