

LUCIA ALBINO GILBERT and JOHN C. GILBERT: *Women Winemakers: Personal Odysseys*. Luminare Press, Eugene, OR, 2020, 246 pp., ISBN: 978-1-64388-258-1 (hardback), \$29.95.

The pinnacular profession of the wine world is a winemaker. Yet, for too many years, the path to the top for women was blocked by male-domination, law, tradition, ignorance, superstition, and outright sexism. In 2011, Lucia and John Gilbert, both retired academics, embarked on a research project to chronicle the progress women have made in becoming winemakers, first looking at California and later France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and New Zealand. *Women Winemakers* summarizes their findings based on meetings with nearly 150 lead winemakers, almost all women, in these regions. It serves as the tangible companion to their website, www.womenwinemakers.com, which invites and posts updates. Lucia has made a career of studying women who break into traditionally male careers, whereas her husband John, a chemist and biochemist, concentrated on the science of winemaking. In contrast to *Wine Girl* by Victoria James (James, 2020) and *Pinot Girl* by Anna Maria Ponzi (Ponzi, 2020), which were also released in 2020 by two industry insiders, this volume presents an outsider's perspective of the recent history, personalities, and current circumstances of women in the wine world.

The Introduction begins with a quotation about the wine business from *Women of Wine* by Ann Matasar (Matasar, 2006). She asserts that “no industry has so resolutely excluded women from positions of influence for so long” (p. 1). The recent history evidencing the increased opportunities for women and revealing remaining challenges is the focus of the Gilberts' work. “Our goal in writing this book is to make lead women winemakers *more visible* (authors' emphasis)” (p. 1) the authors stress. They do so in four parts. The first, consisting of three chapters, is entitled The Trailblazing Women Winemakers. The second, 1980 to the Present: The Career Pathways Taken, comprises four chapters, one for each pathway: sensory, family, science/agronomy, and enology. The three chapters of Part III, Where to from Here? cover an assortment of topics, including advice to anyone wanting to become a winemaker. It is followed by maps of the six regions with the location of each winery visited by the Gilberts marked. Endnotes and References are next. Part IV contains five appendices and a glossary. An eight-page two-column index is included. There are more than two dozen black and white photographs and figures interspersed throughout the text, page numbers for which are listed separately on pages x–xi.

The first two chapters of Part I introduce the trailblazing female winemakers in California during the years 1965–1974 and 1975–1979. “We start with 1965 because this is the year when MaryAnn Graf graduated from UC Davis in Fermentation Sciences, the first woman to do so” (p. 9) the Gilberts explain. After a series of lower level positions, Graf was hired by Simi in 1973 and became the first female winemaker in California. In addition to her, seven other women who became lead winemakers between 1965 and 1974 are profiled. Among them is Zelma Long, who succeeded Graf in 1979 after a stint as the chief enologist at

Robert Mondavi, where she hired a few of the others. “Zelma was in a unique position...not only as a gatekeeper for hiring but also as a wise mentor” (p. 23) the authors point out. Long, who wrote the Foreword to the book, went on to a distinguished career and garnered several awards.

The second chapter covering the next five years introduces a dozen women who began working in California’s wine industry in the years after the Judgment of Paris tasting in 1976. Four of these are portrayed in more detail. One of them, Carol Shelton, shared her experiences at Rodney Strong/Windsor Vineyards over 19 years first as an enologist and later as a winemaker for the Windsor Vineyard label. There “she had to deal with the usual and pervasive sexist attitudes...despite being named the most awarded winemaker in the US for at least fifteen years and winemaker of the year several times” (p. 34). She finally decided to go out on her own when the president of the winery sent flowers and congratulations to her male counterpart after she won a top award at the California State Fair.

In Chapter Three, we visit with six female winemakers in the Champagne region of France; Piemonte, Italy; Rioja and Priorat, Spain; the Douro Valley, Portugal; and Hawke’s Bay, New Zealand. In addition to traditional paternalism and inheritance laws that favored sons, women in Europe faced bizarre beliefs that limited their roles. For example, in Champagne “even in the early 1990s, some still held to the myth that the presence of a menstruating woman in the cellar would turn wine into vinegar” (p. 40). In Spain, opportunities for women were restricted under Franco. Though circumstances improved after his death in 1975 and the transition to democracy, Daphne Glorian-Solomon, proprietor and winemaker of Clos Erasmus in Priorat, maintains that “[t]he higher you get, the harder it is for a woman to get the job. People still have a hard time to accept a woman as a boss” (p. 49).

Part II contains four chapters, each of which explores one pathway to a career in wine and contains profiles of women winemakers who followed that route after 1980. Chapter Four, The Sensory Pathway, also highlights Professor Ann Noble, the first woman hired as a faculty member in the Department of Viticulture and Enology at University of California, Davis, and a developer of the “Aroma Wheel.” The Family Pathway, the title of Chapter Five, considers several women, each of whom became “the first daughter to become the winemaker for her family’s estate” (p. 77). In Chapter Six, we meet three female winemakers who followed the agronomy pathway and three who came to wine via science, chemistry, in particular. The enology pathway taken by six women is the subject of Chapter Seven.

Part III begins with Chapter Eight, Predictions Based on Our Empirical Studies of California Winemakers, which summarizes the results of three studies that seek to validate “the *assumption* (authors’ emphasis) that women were increasingly moving into the lead winemaking positions in California and that gender equality was close to being achieved” (p. 127). The first looks at the percent of female and male lead winemakers to see “whether women winemakers in California have shattered the ‘glass ceiling’” (p. 127). Though the criteria for doing so are never

presented, the conclusion, based on the finding “that 9.8% of California wineries reported a woman as their main or lead winemaker...” (p. 129), is that they have not. The second study revealed that female winemakers “[p]roportional to their representation...are making wines that are more highly acclaimed in comparison to those of their male counterparts, as evidenced by their inclusion in *Opus Vino...*” (p. 134). This conclusion should be strengthened with support from other reputable sources. The third study found that the percentage of wineries with female lead winemakers increased “from 10% in 1999 to 14.7% in 2015 overall, and 20.5% when only available positions were considered” (p. 134). “We interpret the results to mean that progress appears steady but slow,” (p. 134) the Gilberts conclude.

Career advice for winemaker wannabes is outlined in Chapter Nine. The recommendations are based on the conversations the authors had with the women winemakers they met with. “The responses from the diverse group...were remarkably consistent” (p. 142) they determined. These include getting a formal education and experience working harvest, in the cellar and laboratory, and tasting. Also “[c]onfidence, persistence, and a strong work ethic are all essential” (p.145). Being part of a network, finding a mentor, and getting involved professionally are all important. The chapter includes a list of 20 qualities of a competent winemaker that can be viewed as success attributes. Examples are a strong science background, solid technical training, and a discriminating palate. “Special Words for Women Entering the Field or Early in Their Careers” are offered regarding getting a first job, how to behave, and how to move up. Juggling work and family is also covered. This 14-page chapter, a distillation of lessons learned from those women who made it, is the most valuable contribution of the book.

Chapter Ten very briefly returns to the importance of career pathways, addresses why it is taking so long for women to achieve their goals, and what is being done to promote change. Each region the authors visited has some activity or organization dedicated to the advancement of women. For example, “*Femmes & Vins de Bourgogne* is one of the ten regional association of *Femmes de Vin (French Wine Women)*” (p. 161).

The appendices in Part IV contain shorter profiles of the women winemakers introduced in more detail in Chapters One and Two, along with others who were only briefly mentioned as well as those who began their careers between 1980 and 1984. There are also lists of winemakers by region and country. Guiding questions for the interviews are also shared. While the inclusion of a glossary might be helpful to some readers, I found at least one inaccuracy: Cabernet Franc is a parent of Cabernet Sauvignon (the other being Sauvignon blanc), not a cousin as indicated.

The Gilberts are mostly successful in producing a volume intended for a wide audience that blends scholarly analyses with case studies. Their adherence to the mantra guiding academic expositions, “tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them,” unfortunately occasionally results in excessive repetition of the same point over just a few pages. That Graf was the first female graduate

in fermentation science at the University of California, Davis, is mentioned on pages 4, 9, and 10. Cathy Corison's quotation: "Back in 1978, when I did my first harvest, I never thought that women would be recognized as winemakers" appears on page 1 and 36. The short profiles in Appendix I of those already presented in more depth earlier add nothing.

Since *Women Winemakers* is a snapshot of a work in progress, many of the particulars in it will change over time. Nevertheless, there are insights of lasting value, especially to those contemplating a career in the wine industry with aspirations of reaching the top of the profession. The four pathways are a clever categorization of the sources of motivation for those considering entering the business. Success attributes of and lessons learned by those who have reached the top offer essential wisdom. For the rest of us not in pursuit of a career in winemaking, the book and website give us visibility into another enterprise where women are finally making progress, albeit at a pace too slow for many.

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DEREK SANDHAUS: *Drunk in China: Baijiu and the World's Oldest Drinking Culture*. Potomac Books, an Imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 2019, 295 pp. ISBN: 9781640120976 (hardcover), \$29.95.

As the title states, China has one of the oldest, if not the oldest, drinking cultures in the world. Residues of alcohol have been found on Chinese pottery dating back 9,000 years. Given the size of the Chinese population, its distilled white liquor, baijiu, is also the most consumed spirit in the world. Yet knowledge and appreciation of baijiu remain limited outside of east Asia.¹ On their first sip, most novices react

¹ The word jiu refers to alcoholic drinks and baijiu (literally, white liquor) specifies it as distilled white spirit compared to, for example, putaojiu (grape wine) or pijiu (beer).