

BOOK AND FILM REVIEWS

Michael Broadbent: *Wine Tasting, Commemorative Edition*

Academie du Vin Library, 2019, 160 pp.,
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Evelyn Waugh, in *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), describes a wine tasting (pp. 98–99):

We would sit in the Painted Parlour with three bottles open on the table and three glasses before each of us We warmed the glass slightly at a candle, filled it a third high, swirled the wine round, nursed it in our hands, held it to the light, breathed it, sipped it, filled our mouths with it, and rolled it over the tongue, ringing it on the palate like a coin on a counter, tilted our heads back and let it trickle down the throat. Then we talked about it, nibbled ... biscuits, and passed on to another wine; then back to the first, then on to another, until all three were in circulation and the order of glasses got confused, and we fell out over which was which, and we passed the glasses to and fro between us until there were six glasses, some of them with mixed wines in them which we had filled from the wrong bottle, till we were obliged to start again ...

Charles Ryder and Sebastian Flyte would have had more success if they had access to Michael Broadbent's classic on wine tasting. First published in 1968, and republished a dozen times, the commemorative edition reviewed here is a glossy-paged version.

Of the 160 pages, the first 26 are hagiographic testimonials to Michael Broadbent (who passed away in 2020) from the greats of the international wine community—Hugh Johnson, Jancis Robinson, Steven Spurrier, and others. The bulk of the book is 76 pages, followed by 10 appendices describing wine tasting terms in multiple European and Asian languages. This is followed by another 32 pages of testimonials by friends and family—for example, “Michael as Father,” “Michael as Grandfather,” and concludes with an index. In short, hardly worth the \$44 Amazon Books will charge you.

In the 76-page core of the book, some of the advice is banal—no smoking at the tasting; spit don't swallow; keep notes. Other advice is more informative—dry before sweet; young before old; modest before fine. Still other advice is more controversial—serve reds at room temperature and whites at cellar temperature.

There is an excellent description of wine appearance, cataloguing the significance of different colors. Grape varieties and regions, too, are discussed informatively. Finally, there is a “how to organize a tasting” section from which the aforementioned Charles Ryder and Sebastian Flyte surely would have benefited.

Wine Tasting may be of historical significance. But it would be no more than a modest acquisition to the library of most readers of this journal.