

Book Reviews

Author, Title	Reviewer
Henry H. Work <i>Wood, Whiskey and Wine: A History of Barrels</i>	Nick Vink
Mark E. Ricardo <i>Simply Burgundy: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Wines of Burgundy</i>	Christian G.E. Schiller
Maximillian Potter <i>Shadows in the Vineyard: The True Story of the Plot to Poison the World's Greatest Wine</i>	Neal D. Hulkower
Mara P. Squicciarini and Johan Swinnen (eds.) <i>The Economics of Chocolate</i>	Howard-Yana Shapiro
Jeffrey L. Lamy <i>The Business of Wine Making</i>	Karl Storchmann

HENRY H. WORK: *Wood, Whiskey and Wine: A History of Barrels*. Reaktion Books, London, 2014, 240 pp., ISBN 9781780233567 (Hardback), £20.00.

One of the many parallels explained in this fascinating book is that between wooden boats and wooden barrels. Barrels were required to store all sorts of things (food, booze, water, and nails) on ships as soon as the technology of boatbuilding became sufficiently advanced to undertake long sea voyages. Barrel makers (coopers) and ships carpenters plied a trade that was almost entirely interchangeable, using the same tools (axes and saws, wedges or froes, broadaxes and adzes, and many more), working with the same materials (wood, mostly), and adopting the same techniques (bending wood with heat, making the vessel watertight when required). So the association between barrels and ships is a long one, even though these days ships and storage units are no longer made of wood, and the apogee of using barrels for storage and packaging was in the late nineteenth century.

The book is divided into 14 chapters, starting with the simple question, why wooden barrels? In addressing this, the reader learns the origins of gathering around the office water cooler and the etymology of the terms *scuttlebutt*, *pork barrel*, and *scraping the*

bottom of the barrel; why barrels are round; and why barrels taper from the middle outward. So barrels were the preferred means of packaging because they were secure, mobile, adaptable, and cheap and easy to make—the process of making them having hardly changed in centuries. Of course, when made of the right wood they imparted flavors to fine wines and whisky, whiskey and bourbon.

Chapters 2–5 then take the reader through the history of barrels, from the age of the Celts, who started out with amphorae to transport olives and wine and then slowly developed the prototypes of the barrels that were to become so ubiquitous in later times. The Celts passed the baton to the Romans, who gave us the early association between barrels and wine. By the Middle Ages, barrels had become commonplace in the ancient wine-growing regions such as Bordeaux, where there was a desperate need for an efficient means of transporting wine to markets near and far (especially London). By this time, cooperage had become a recognized trade, one of only about 40 designated crafts in Britain and Europe.

Chapter 6 traces the parallels between boats and barrels, and their making, maintenance, and functions, in more detail, and chapter 7 provides more detail about the changing organization of coopers: from guilds to cooperages. Chapter 8 then turns to the modern barrels: the near monopoly of oak wood for aging wines and spirits, with French oak (*Quercus rober*) favored for wine and American oak (*Quercus alba*) largely used for aging whiskey and bourbon in the United States; the geography of the production of oak trees; how these barrels are crafted (chapter 9); and how aging in oak actually works (chapter 10). Of particular interest is the role played by oxygen in softening the wine; the types of flavors that the wood imparts to the wine, both naturally and through the toasting of the wood; and the different designs and styles of the modern barrel. Some of these issues are then revisited in more detail in chapters 11–14.

This is an accessible, interesting, and stimulating book that tells a compelling story about the origins of one of the most important (and expensive) parts of the modern making of fine wines.

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MARK E. RICARDO: *Simply Burgundy: A Practical Guide to Understanding the Wines of Burgundy*. Mark E. Ricardo Book, 2014, 56 pp., ISBN 978-0990513704 (paperback), \$12.99.

Burgundy is the most *terroir*-oriented region in France if not in the whole world. The focus is on the area of origin, as opposed to Bordeaux, where classifications are producer driven and awarded to individual chateaux. A specific vineyard (*climat*