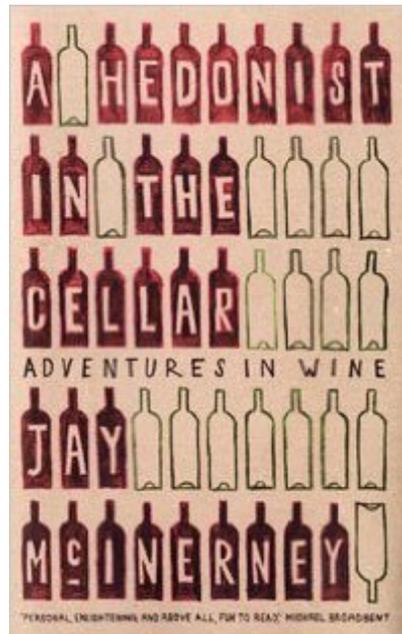


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A Hedonist In The Cellar : Adventures In Wine



Synopsis

Jay McInerney, internationally celebrated author of *Bright Lights, Big City*, turns his hand here to his lifelong love affair with wine. Peals of wisdom are offered on the subjects of the best wine for romantics, the parallels between Californian wines and floundering Hollywood stars, the choice of wine for the author's own debauched forty-eighth birthday party, the 'high-testosterone grape' that is Colin Farrell, absinthe, 'the wild green fairy', and what wine is best drunk with chocolate. At the same time McInerney is a genuine connoisseur, taking the reader on a tour through the wine regions of the world and imparting tried and tested advice on grapes and vintages, bouquets, noses and finishes. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Christened "the best wine writer in America" by Salon, Jay McInerney is truly the master of the grape, sans pomposity. In the years since his previous collection, *BACCHUS AND ME*, he has traveled to more countries for his trade, sniffed more woody aromas and uncorked more bottles than most sommeliers in the world. His monthly House & Garden column is read by thousands of oenophiles worldwide. He is also the award-winning author of seven novels, including most recently the critically acclaimed *THE GOOD LIFE*. In his latest concoction, *A HEDONIST IN THE CELLAR*, McInerney combines his extensive and perpetually growing knowledge of wine with a penchant for telling a good cocktail hour story to create a collection that is thoroughly pleasurable to read and digest. As all essay anthologies should, *HEDONIST* begins with an informative introduction, written in McInerney's comfortable, laid-back style --- much like an evening's first glass of wine. He writes of his formative years at his job as a wine clerk at a rinky-dink "boozeteria" in Syracuse, New York,

called the Westcott Cordial Shop. It was there that he heard about the acceptance of his first novel by Random House, while studying under Raymond Carver and Tobias Wolff in the Graduate Writing Program at Syracuse University. It was also there that he laid the groundwork for what later would be a career as a wine connoisseur, by reading the shop's books on wine and occasionally lifting a bottle or two to taste. Ten years or so later, he was offered the wine column gig, despite his minimal training. "I'd never taken a class, or attended a wine tasting, or spit into a bucket..." Yet he managed to pull it off, purely for the love of learning about it and the enjoyment factor. "It's an inexhaustible subject, a nexus of subjects ... Ideally, the appreciation of wine is balanced between consumption on the one hand and contemplation and analysis on the other." These humble beginnings, combined with a desire to share his burgeoning knowledge with others, make these essays quite refreshing to read --- without the haughty hangover. From Chile to New Zealand, German Riesling to Absinthe, McInerney --- a "pilgrim of the palate [and] devout hedonist in search of the next ecstatic revelation" --- has developed a rich appreciation of and refined palate for all varieties of wine. His essays reflect a passion that is both respectable and contagious. Even amateur wine tasters will be entertained by his natural ability to draw them in with stories of celebrity beverage preferences, intrepid oenophile adventures for the "perfect" bottle, and sommelier snafus. Conversely, snooty sippers might easily tire of his overly casual tone, but these wine buffs will likely be too busy writing their own tasting tomes rather than reading about others' observations. Best kept on the shelf as a flip-through reference rather than a straight-through read, HEDONIST is also ideal for chuckle-worthy truisms such as: "Let's be honest: there's only one activity more satisfying than drinking good wine with good food; and if you're drinking good wine in the right company, the one pleasure, more often than not, will lead to the other." --- Reviewed by Alexis Burling

It should first be noted that Jay McInerney was a writer long before he became a writer about wine. That's an important distinction, because it's easy to forget, when reading McInerney's witticisms and anecdotes, that he's also got a pretty good street cred as a wine authority. "A Hedonist in the Cellar" is probably one of the more aptly named books ever to be published, because it's about a guy who truly loves what he gets paid to do. Unlike other books written about the perimeters of luxe lifestyles, McInerney's offering doesn't come across as a smug piece in which the author revels in highlighting what normal people will never get to enjoy. In "Hedonist," McInerney gets beyond the froufrou language that causes most of the civilized world to arch a brow at wine lovers (and collectors and writers) and dismiss them as pompous snobs. This latest book, a compilation of funny, frightfully easy-to-read essays about wine around the world, makes readers feel as though they've dropped in

for a chat or were allowed to eavesdrop just outside the dining room door as a fabulous buffet of stories unfolds. McInerney -- and this is where the ordinary part ends -- takes readers to the hearts of the finest wine cellars and vineyards in the world. It's not an academic exercise, but rather like hitching a ride in the back of an old Mini (before they became fashionable) and rattling around for a year or so. In the case of the essays of the book, there are five years of writing. He shares how the wine world works, what to look for in certain wines and, most important, how to find a wine you like and, by God, be confident in that choice. People new to drinking wine might not be interested in "Hedonist" as a beginner's introduction to one of the world's oldest beverages. Some of the labels are fairly obscure, and a person trying to decide if they're a "red" or a "white" might not be so enamored of the intricacies of a particular Chilean vintage. They'd be better served by a book that's a little less chatty and a little more straightforward.

Wine columnist Jay McInerney has been billed the 'best wine writer in America' and his previous collection BACCHUS AND ME earned him much praise: so it's right to expect much from his sequel A HEDONIST IN THE CELLAR - and his memoir doesn't disappoint. Here are over five years' worth of essays and explorations in the wine world - and we do mean 'world' - following passions, people, and wines around the globe. It's a fine, literary choice any general-interest public library strong in food and wine lending will want. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

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