

## Some very fine wine books



It's getting to be that time of year when the world of books to read and books to give collide. They are often one and the same thing, especially for wine and spirits aficionados.

This year, there has been an outpouring of interesting books. Here are our choices:

“A Man and his Mountain: The Everyman who Created Kendall-Jackson and Became America’s Greatest Wine Entrepreneur,” by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Edward Humes (\$26.99, Public Affairs Books), is an in-depth 306-page look at the life and wines of the late Jess Jackson, and through it a wonderful accounting of recent California wine history. The kind of story movie directors covet, it starts with a “street-smart farm boy” buying his first vineyard and ends with a self-made billionaire owning some 14,000 acres of vineyard land and the most popular chardonnay brand in the world.

“Adventures on the Wine Route: A Wine Buyer’s Tour of France,” by Berkeley-based wine merchant Kermit Lynch (\$28, Farrar, Straus and Giroux), a favorite of wine drinkers everywhere, is celebrating its 25th anniversary of publication with a redesign and updates, including a list of Lynch’s 25 most memorable bottles. The outspoken French wine authority serves as both valuable resource and lively raconteur.

“American Wine,” by Jancis Robinson and Linda Murphy (\$50, University of California Press), released earlier this year, is the most comprehensive and up-to-date resource on the planet for where wine is being made across the United States, from detailed looks at Napa, Sonoma and Santa Barbara County to what’s going on in Colorado, Missouri and the entirety of New England. With helpful maps and producer recommendations, this book will ignite a desire to hit the open road and taste it all yourself.

“Cheese & Beer,” by Napa Valley-based writer Janet Fletcher (\$24.99, Andrews McMeel), released last April, is a lovely slip of a book packed with good ideas for pairing craft brews with craft cheeses, including party platter ideas and an indispensable chart on appropriate beers for many styles of cheese. Organized by beer types — ales and lagers — Fletcher gives each beer a series of style notes, followed by a list of specific beers worth trying and their affinities with specific cheeses. Barley Wine, for example, goes well with Cowgirl Creamery’s Red Hawk. Yum.

“The Drunken Botanist,” by New York Times bestselling author Amy Stewart (\$19.95, Algonquin Books), got a lot of attention when it was released earlier this year but is worth revisiting for the gardeners and cocktail historians in your life. It’s a fascinating exploration into all the herbs, spices, berries, flowers and other botanicals worth growing and how they play into a murderer’s row of flavorful cocktails, from the Rusty Nail to the Blushing Mary. The cocktail recipes are straightforward and inspired, with ideas for how to make syrups, infusions and garnishes, too.

“The Exes in my iPod: A Playlist of the Men Who Rocked Me to Wine Country,” by Jordan Vineyard & Winery communications director Lisa Mattson (\$19.99, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform) is actually more fun to read on an iPad, iPod or

Kindle (\$4.99), since curated music playlists can be listened to along the way, getting to the heart of Mattson's novel about young adult life, love and the road to good wine, accompanied by songs of joy and woe.

"Mendocino Roots & Ridges: Wine Notes from America's Greenest Wine Region," by Mendocino resident Heidi Cusick Dickerson (\$29.95, Mendocino Grassroots Publications), is a collection of stories about the winemakers and grape growers who make Mendocino what it is, from barbera and zinfandel producers like Greg Graziano of Graziano Family of Wines in Redwood Valley to pinot noir perfectionists like Jason and Molly Drew of Drew Family Cellars, high atop Mendocino Ridge. The history of Italian immigrants, the diversity of soils and climates and a discussion of what it means to be green all figure into the mix, with captivating photographs throughout.

"99 Bottles of Wine: The Making of the Contemporary Wine Label," by David Schuemann of CF Napa Brand Design (\$49.50, Val de Grace Books), is a visual exploration of what it takes to create wine labels of substance, that tell a story and engage a consumer, from the original sketches done by hand to the final labels applied to each bottle. The visuals are accompanied by background stories of the people and the ideas behind the wines.

"Perspective Napa Valley," by Sam Aslanian (\$95, Napa Valley Vintners), is a stunningly gorgeous coffee table book of fine art photography that captures the region's physical and social culture, created in collaboration with the Napa Valley Vintners. An esteemed professional photographer living in the Napa Valley, Aslanian uses long-expired, high-speed film to create his images, lending the book a sensual, otherworldly feel. Books ordered before Dec. 4 will come signed by the photographer.

"What to Drink with What you Eat," by Andrew Dornenburg and Karen Page (\$35, Bulfinch Press), is an indispensable resource, categorized by type of food — "Empanadas" — followed by a list of recommended beverage types with which to pair them (not just wine but beer, spirits, sake, juice, coffee and tea). It now comes in a handy iPhone app (\$2.99) with more than 12,500 listings covering 1,500-plus food categories,

searchable by ingredient, cuisine or dish.

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