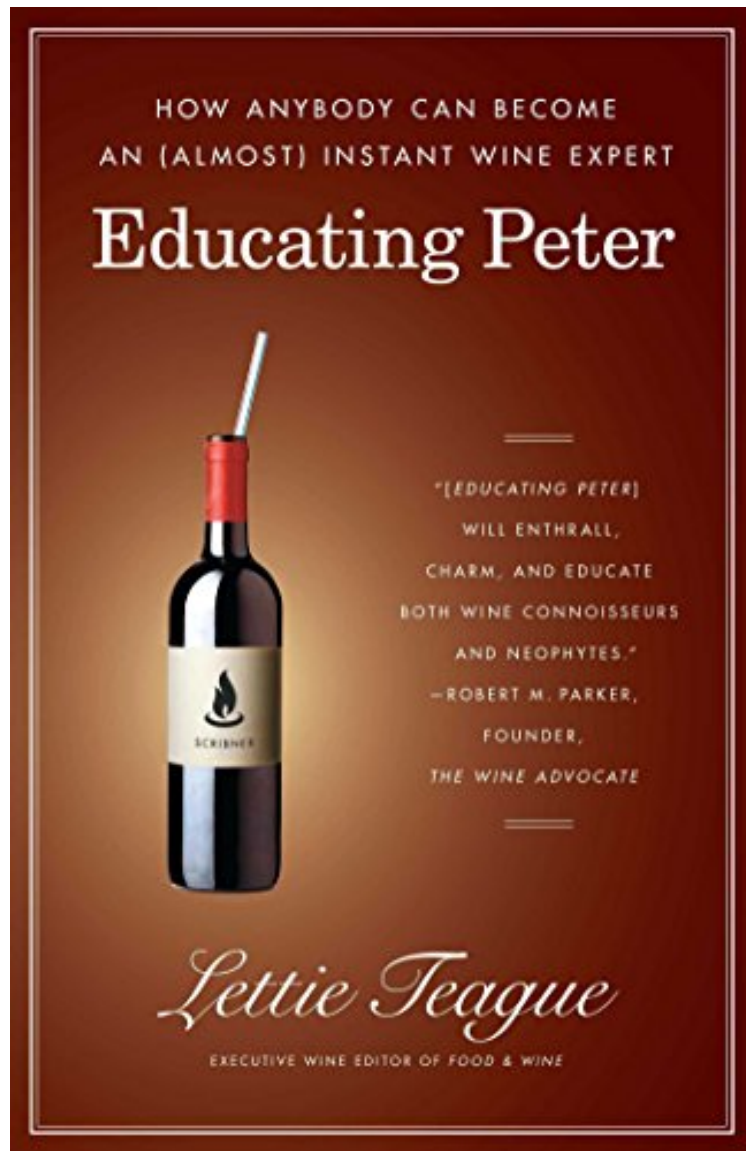


(Ebook free) Educating Peter

Educating Peter

Lettie Teague

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Lettie Teague : Educating Peter before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Educating Peter:

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information about wine. There is a lot of detail about wine countries... everything else was memorable except that part. Very helpful book and funny. Enjoyed reading. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Easy ReadBy Paul FrazierEnjoyable read and insight on some various wines. Sometimes you think you know a lot about wine and then you realize you don't. Oftentimes while reading I thought Lettie was talking about me!!

Lettie Teague knows wine. She has been the wine editor at Food Wine magazine for almost a decade. The only question she is asked more than "Can you recommend a great wine for under \$10?" -- great cheap white: Argiolas Costamolino Vermentino from Sardinia; great cheap red: Alamos Malbec from Argentina -- is "What is the best way to learn about wine?" After many years of fielding these questions, Lettie was determined to debunk the myth that learning about wine is hard. She decided to find just one wine idiot and teach him a few fundamentals -- how to order off a restaurant wine list without fear, approach a wine merchant with confidence, and perhaps even score a few points off a wine snob. Enter her neighbor, good friend and complete wine neophyte Peter Travers, Rolling Stone magazine's longtime film critic. Peter Travers proved the perfect Eliza Doolittle to Lettie's Professor Higgins. As a film critic he made bold pronouncements ("This movie stinks," which could be readily translated to "This Cabernet tastes like Merlot") and exhibited a finely tuned visual sense ("The cinematography could be improved" could easily become "This wine is too white"). But, most important, Peter knew almost nothing about wine. As Lettie begins their lessons, Peter puts down his ever-present glass of "fatty" Chardonnay and learns that there is a huge world out there full of all kinds of wine. He is taught to swirl his glass to release the wine's aromatic compounds -- or esters -- above the rim and vows, "I'm going to do that for Martin Scorsese next time I see him. I'll volatilize my esters for him." Thus Lettie enlightens her wine-challenged but film-savvy friend about the Facts of Wine: how to hold a glass; the vocabulary of wine; how wine is made; how to read labels; how to tell the difference between grape varieties; how to make sense of vintages; how to glean information about a wine simply by looking at the shape and color of the bottle; and an overview of the great wine regions of the Old World and the New. Finally, after many fact-filled, hilarious lessons, Lettie takes Peter to the most famous American wine region of all, Napa Valley, where he hobnobs with wine and Hollywood royalty and finally puts his new skills to the test in the real world. Part buddy movie, part serious wine tutorial, *Educating Peter* is as much a treat for oenophiles in on the joke as it is for beginners who think Chablis is a brand name of wine.

"Lettie Teague is a true original -- witty, articulate, and in love with wine as well as fascinating people. Her debut book will enthrall, charm, and educate both wine connoisseurs and neophytes. In short, it is a brilliant and captivating read from one of America's most gifted commentators on all things about wine." -- Robert M. Parker Jr., founder, *The Wine Advocate*"I enjoyed the opportunity to learn, even after thirty years as a winemaker, new facts and approaches to wine, as well as to enjoy the camaraderie of two professionals, both passionate and knowledgeable and at the top of their respective fields. I would recommend this book to the wine novice as well as the wine lover." -- Ed Sbragia, wine master, Beringer Wines, and owner/wine master, Sbragia Family Wines" We applaud the entertaining new wine book 'Educating Peter.' [...] Studded with Hollywood names and factoids (director Martin Scorsese's favorite wine is Chianti), the book teaches the basics, from how wine is made, served and tasted to characteristics of wines from the Old World (Europe) and the New World (most of the rest of the globe). It's a hook that's ideal for young wine lovers and movie buffs who find wine encyclopedias off-putting, given not only Rolling Stone's mostly under-30 demographics but also the number of film-world luminaries involved in wine." (April 11) -- *The Washington Post*, Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg" If Nora Ephron were a wine journalist, her work would read like that of Lettie Teague." (March 14) -- *The New York Sun*, Peter Hellman" Like a boozy Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle, or maybe the Professor and Gilligan, these two rack up dozens of hours together in the pursuit of knowledge. [...] If this doesn't sound like other beginner wine books, that's because it's not. [...] The pace is never plodding, and you don't feel like you're a fourth-grader reading 'Dick and Jane.'" (May 4) -- *Daily News*, Rachel Wharton

About the Author Lettie Teague is an executive editor at Food Wine magazine. She writes a monthly column for the magazine, "Wine Matters," for which she won the 2003 James Beard M. F. K. Fisher Distinguished Writing Award. She is also the illustrator and coauthor of *Fear of Wine*.

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How to Taste Just as a would-be golfer is introduced to the game by first learning how to hold a club, so too did Peter need to learn how to hold a glass properly before he began tasting wine. While this may seem like a simple thing, it's surprising how few would-be oenophiles, and even some pros, know how it's properly done. When I first met Peter (who, by the way, doesn't golf), he clutched his wineglass so tightly it looked as if he expected it to be ripped from his hand. Where had he cultivated such a death grip on a glass stem? Were movie screenings such rough-and-tumble affairs that he needed to guard his glass of Chardonnay with two hands? It wasn't just that Peter's grip looked particularly punishing, but that his hand position made the glass impossible to swirl. And swirling is key when it comes to releasing a wine's aromatic compounds, or "esters." I mentioned esters to Peter, knowing he would appreciate a technical term. Swirling increases the evaporation of a wine and lifts its aromas, its esters, above the rim of the glass. "But I'm left-handed," Peter protested, "I don't think I can do it" -- as if swirling were something that southpaws weren't meant to do. "If a

southpaw like Babe Ruth could pitch a fastball at ninety miles an hour, you can move a glass of wine around a few times," I said, though I knew that any baseball analogy was lost on Peter, unless it was couched in movie terms, specifically the 1948 classic based on the Bambino's life. "You don't even have to swirl the glass in the air," I said, to reassure Peter, who was currently holding his glass uncertainly aloft. "You can just swirl it on the table a few times. In fact, plenty of professionals swirl their glasses on the table, not in the air." Peter looked skeptical but set his glass on the table and gave it a hard push or two. It was at least a movement in the right direction. "Now you're volatilizing your esters," I said to him as he made a slow but complete 360-degree swirl with his glass. "I'm going to do that for Scorsese next time I see him," Peter declared. "I'll volatilize my esters for him." This seemed like an odd way to entertain one of the greatest directors in film, but I figured Peter knew what Scorsese would like. He was the famous film critic, after all. In fact, aroma is all-important when it comes to judging the nature and the character of a wine. The famous French enologist Eacute;mile Peynaud (the great Bordeaux guru and so-called father of modern winemaking) once posited that aroma is what gives a wine its personality. Some have even dared to put an exact figure to its importance, rating it a neat 80 percent of the overall impression of a wine. But whether a full 80 percent or otherwise, there is a great deal that can be learned about a wine from its aroma alone. For example, the aroma can tell you if a wine is dry or sweet, if it has lots of acidity or too much alcohol. Aromas also offer the first indication of trouble: a corked wine can smell like a damp basement or a pile of wet newspapers. "Wet newspapers!" Peter exclaimed, putting his nose deep into the glass as if he were now smelling sodden headlines and type. "This wine isn't flawed," I reassured him. "You won't find those aromas." But Peter kept his nose plunged deep into the bowl, as if to be sure. I asked him to take a good long whiff. "How long should the whiff be?" he replied, a stickler for detail. "Three or four seconds," I replied. Peter nodded, swirled his wine, and gave a sniff of exactly four seconds -- his nose a few feet from the glass. (We'd have to work on glass position as well.) "After I shake the glass, can I taste the wine?" Peter asked. Like most would-be oenophiles, Peter considered smelling the wine more of a ceremonial prelude to drinking than an end unto itself. And yet a person can't taste anywhere near as much as he or she can smell; after all, only four things are detectable by taste: salty, sweet, bitter, and sour. (There is a fifth, umami, though I'm not exactly sure what it has to do with wine.) Other wine-specific characteristics that can be assessed by the taste buds include the presence (or lack) of tannin, acidity, and oak, as well as the weight and the length of the wine -- how long it lasts -- in the mouth. Just about everything else about a wine can be detected by its aromas -- and there might be dozens of detectable aromas in a single wine. "Should I be writing this all down?" Peter asked. It's always a good idea to write down what you think are the most important or most interesting facts about a wine. Most people think they can remember all the specifics, and few actually do. The second-most common thing people say to me is "I wish I had written the name of the wine down." Yet no one has ever been able to explain to me why he did not. "Why don't you buy a notebook to write the names of the wines down in?" I said to Peter. "What kind of notebook should it be?" Peter asked. "The kind you can paste labels inside?" I pictured Peter steaming the labels off bottles of fatty Chardonnay. Any kind would do, I assured him. A notebook is a good place for anyone to jot down impressions, though for the exercise to be truly worthwhile, Peter first needed to learn a few tasting words. For example, the word attack, which is the wine's initial impression. "I like that word," Peter said, showing an unexpectedly pugilistic side. "I'll be using the word attack a lot." But using a word over and over isn't the same as knowing how to use it properly when tasting a wine. And of course, you have to go beyond your initial impression of a wine and taste all of it. "If you only talk about an attack, it's like critiquing a movie based on the first five minutes," I said. Peter looked at me with a slightly raised brow, as if to ask how I dared raid his cinematic turf. Once you're holding a fair amount of the wine in your mouth, you need to move it around so that it touches all the surfaces of your palate. That way you'll have the most complete impression possible of the wine. "Palate surfaces?" Peter balked at the words. "What palate surfaces? And who says I have them? And besides, what if mine aren't any good?" In fact, Peter's palate surfaces are probably pretty much the same as those of everyone else, though some people, such as wine critic Robert Parker, have more sensitive palates. They are called supertasters, but I thought it better not to mention that to Peter lest he be further intimidated. Instead, I suggested that to find his palate surfaces -- and get the full taste of the wine -- Peter should keep his mouth open a bit while tasting. This is called retro-nasal breathing. "Draw the air over your tongue at the same time as you taste the wine. You can taste and smell the wine at the same time." I demonstrated while Peter watched. "That's disgusting," he said. But still Peter gave it a try. I'd poured him a young New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. "This wine has a really aggressive aroma," Peter remarked. "Even though there isn't much color at all." He studied his glass for a minute or two. I was intrigued that Peter expected the wine's aroma and color to be the same in terms of intensity. A wine's color, or its lack, has little to do with its aroma. But it was an interesting observation. Some of the lightest-colored wines, in fact, are some of the most aromatic. Sauvignon Blanc is one example; Riesling and Pinot Noir are two others. Few wine drinkers -- even experienced ones -- pay much attention to a wine's color. Yet color offers several immediate clues about a wine. Such as its age. The younger a white wine, the lighter the color. A white wine actually darkens with age. (And a white wine that's spent time in wood will always be darker than a white wine that hasn't.) With red wines, the opposite is true. Most young red wines start out fairly dark, sometimes almost purplish, and lighten, sometimes nearly to orange, as they age. Color can also be a clue about relative sweetness (dessert wines are comparatively darker than dry wines, and an old

sweet wine can be dark gold).As focused as Peter was on color, I wondered if he might turn out to be some sort of enological visual savant, in the way that some people turn out to be champion spitters or others possess a particularly good sense of smell. But Peter shrugged off the idea, saying, "I've just had a lot of practice looking at things. And besides, I don't think if I go to a restaurant and ask them to hold the bottles up to the light, they're going to like the idea."Copyright copy; 2007 by Lettie Teague