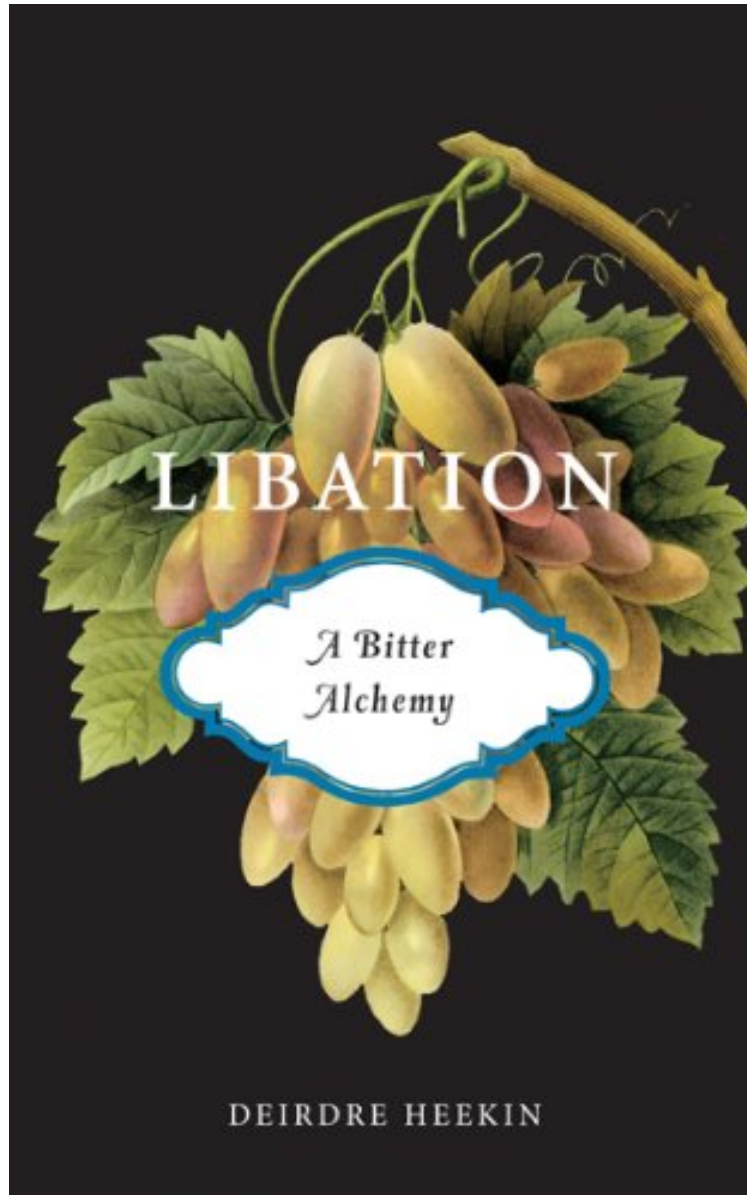


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Libation, A Bitter Alchemy

Deirdre Heekin

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Deirdre Heekin : Libation, A Bitter Alchemy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Libation, A Bitter Alchemy:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The World in a Glass By Aceto Libation is not for everybody. Ms. Heekin is an excellent writer in style and substance. But she is not a professional writer like, say Tracy Kidder or John PcPhee whom you learn to read regardless of subject. She is just far too good a writer to ever want anybody ghosting

her work. So you need to have some hook to this book. Luckily Libation offers several; if you hit even one, good enough. I stopped counting for myself at four: Italy, Vermont, Wine, cultural/gastronomic history with a little science and a garnish of top-notch recipes. If you are interested in viticulture, this book is definitely for you. If Vermont conjures up more than tourist imagery and gets into bone and soil, this book is calling you. Her preface alone is one of the strongest passages of prose of this kind I have seen in a long time. Her terroir is deeply Southern. She might have been in the same furrow as O'Connor or Welty, but she turned to the land of Edith Wharton and Emily Dickinson by way of Benvenuto Cellini and Pellegrino Artusi. But Ms. Heekin has a different profession, with a need to write forcefully and cleanly about it. She is writing for everybody whose life she has touched in her bakery years or in her current osteria, for all of us with similar interests. But I think she is writing for those to be born in a century or three because of her love of voices past. She has discussions of process, of working, of soil. Some will complain she is too technical about topography and soil composition. But if you are serious about growing, you need to be seriously learning such things; she is merely retracing her steps for us to see. It is not her plot (*groan*) I care about; it is her process. Ms. Heekin has a nice section on making rosolio from rose petals and grain alcohol. Quite useful, this. I did not know the medicinal properties of herbs are preserved in wine or other alcohol. Now my appreciation of aqua vitae has ripened. She imparts her information as a travelogue of her studies and trials. She takes us unhurried to see all the sights along the way, unafraid of stopping a while, lingering on thoughts, or a memory, a landscape. Do not come here if you are on the march. But she is no dilettante. It is the little things that tell. She knows the true Manhattan is made with rye and not bourbon. She teaches Campari, not just tossing off some third hand recipes. And Sazerac! This is a book I will return to many times. It will outlive us all. I already have her other book on order. Salute

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Beautifully written book about a fascinating subject. By Curious Epicure Anyone who has ever had the pleasure of trying small-batch, hand-made regional liqueurs in inns, small restaurants or even private homes anywhere in the world will enjoy this book. The partaking of these liquid offerings often creates the perception of being inducted into a secret society or, at the very least, the feeling you have somehow been deemed worthy to share these very special concoctions with their makers. To Heekin, these experiences were revelatory and life-changing, and she describes her journey with passion and a wonderful richness of words. The book is full of charmingly written stories about the people and potions she meets along the way, and of her own trials and tribulations in making her own libations. I had the odd experience, however, of loving Heekin's writing, but not quite liking her. While she and her husband seem to have so much going for them, she insists on repeatedly doubling back to make backhand swipes at her parents' relationship with alcohol. She reminds me of Ruth Reichl, whose writing is absolutely brilliant but always annoyingly undercut by constant exegeses of her mother's imperfections. Heekin's familial complaints detract from the flow of the book and leave me wondering why she chose to make, and drink, alcoholic beverages for her life's work when all I really want to know is how they make that rose petal liqueur. That said, Heekin's passion for history and impeccable research shine through and she has written an interesting book about a fascinating subject in a poetic and highly readable style. Her passion for her subject is infectious and might just send you into the kitchen to try your hand at some of the recipes included in the book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. What a tasty surprise of a book. By +or-I'm interested in viticulture, Italy, food, science, culture and people, so this collection of memoirs was a fabulous find for me. It was perfect bathtub reading after a very long day at work and accompanied by a robust glass of wine, I was drawn in to the experiences of the author, reminding myself that my passport hasn't been used in some time. With recipes interspersed, I found my copy had little bits of sticky notes stuck throughout so I would not lose what I wanted to reference later. I suspect that I would have become quite skilled in note taking had I read this book on Kindle. It is a book to share and sections are wonderful to read aloud to a friend.

For many years, Deirdre Heekin has been creating an unusual, revivalist wine archive of rare and traditional Italian varietals at Osteria Pane e Salute, the nationally celebrated restaurant and wine bar she shares with her chef husband, Caleb Barber. Self-taught in the world of Italian wines, she is known for her fine-tuned work with scent and taste and her ability to pair wines and food in unexpected yet terroir-driven ways. In *Libation, a Bitter Alchemy*, a series of linked personal essays, Heekin explores the curious development of her nose and palate, her intuitive education and relationship with wine and spirits, and her arduous attempts to make liqueurs and wine from the fruits of her own land in northern New England. The essays follow her as she unearths ruby-toned wines given up by the ghosts of long-gone wine makers from the red soil of Italy, her adoptive land; as she embarks on a complicated pilgrimage to the home of one of the world's oldest cocktails, Sazerac, in Katrina-soaked New Orleans; as she attempts a midsummer crafting of a brandy made from inherited roses, the results of an old Sicilian recipe she found in a dusty bookstore in Naples. Musing on spirits from Campari to algermes, Heekin's writing is as intoxicating, rich, and carefully crafted as the wines, liquors, and locales she loves.

"There will be obvious comparisons between Deirdre Heekin's thoughtful observations, musings, and distillations of Italian culture and those of other writers of expatriate life under the Tuscan sun, clouds and beyond, but Heekin

incorporates an entirely other essence largely overlooked in that genre: the alchemy that fuels all of those glorious meals and recipes she recounts, not only in Italy, but Vermont, Paris, New Orleans, and Belfast. From jug wines to Brunello, rosolio to Campari, Sazeracs to Murphy's Irish Whisky (neat, please!), Heekin rightly discovers along the way that the true recipe for great alchemy demands the magic of memory, and all the wonderment and discovery that come with it."--Anthony Giglio, author of FOOD WINE's Wine Guide 2009 and 2010, Cocktails in New York, and several Mr. Boston Official Bartender's Guides"Deirdre Heekin sets a bountiful table for her readers. Libation is like the best of meals, in this case one with plates full of delicious memories and ruminations on passion and curiosity. And, finally and most importantly, there is a most satisfying dollop of love, a fine dessert which leaves us with an almost unimaginably sweet regard for life."--Neal I. Rosenthal, author of Reflections of a Wine Merchant"The combination of travel, the alchemy of liqueurs, and her sheer joie de vivre make Heekin's book as delicious, intriguing, and warming as any of the recipes she pursues."--Joseph Olshan, author of The Conversion"The alchemy of Deirdre Heekin's beautifully evocative memoir, her libation in tribute to the art of making wine, spirits, and other 'waters of life,' is not only the alchemy of grapes as they ferment, or that of an American couple falling in love with French and Italian cordials and spirits, or that of the pungent taste of liqueurs, whiskeys, and eaux de vie remembered on snowy Vermont evenings with such intensity that fervent, joyful, sun-filled memories of love, friendship, pleasure, and bliss come alive. It is also the alchemy of a prose transformed into a spirited and intoxicating poetry."--Richard Stamelman, author of Perfume: Joy, Obsession, Scandal, Sin; A Cultural History of FragranceAbout the AuthorDeirdre Heekin and Caleb Barber are the proprietors and, respectively, wine director and head chef of Osteria Pane e Salute, a boutique restaurant and wine bar in Woodstock, Vermont, recently acclaimed in Bon Appeacutet;tit, The Boston Globe, Travel and Leisure, and Attacheacute;. Heekin and Barber grow most of their own produce in addition to working with local farm partners. In preparation for his role as head chef of Osteria Pane e Salute, Barber apprenticed with an artisanal baker and in a small trattoria in Tuscany. Heekin and Barber live in Barnard, Vermont, where Heekin produces artisanal after-dinner brandies and micro-vintage garage wine for the osteria. Visit Deirdre and Caleb's blog, Fuoricitta (Out of The City), at <http://fuoricitta.blogspot.com/>