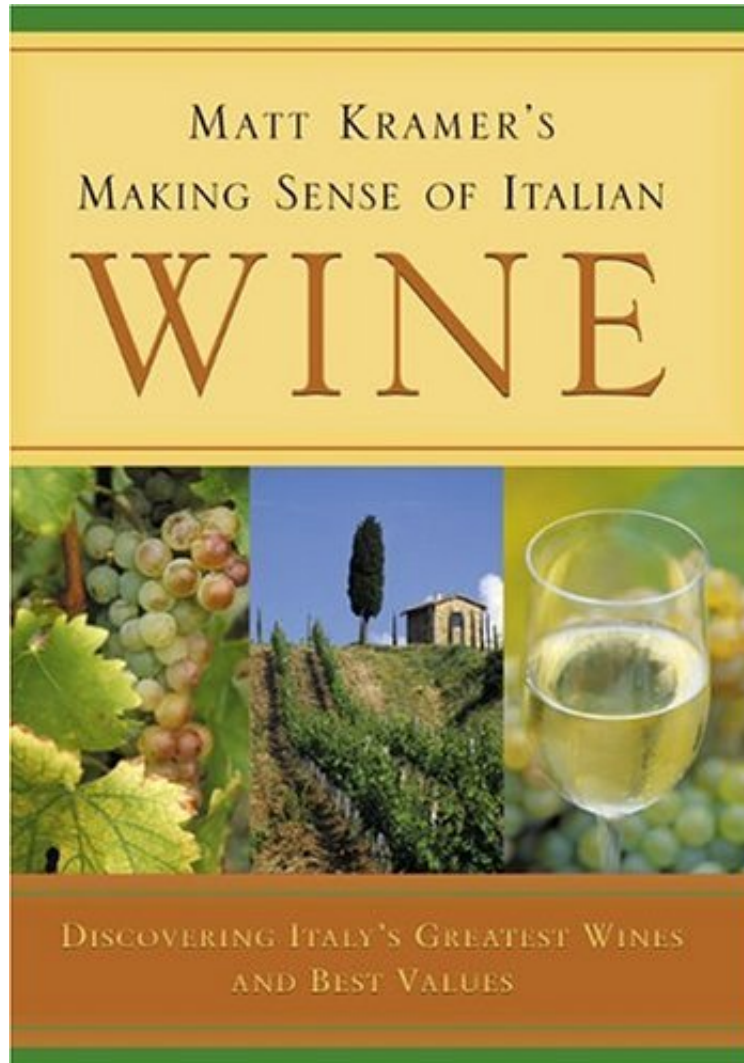


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Matt Kramer

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Matt Kramer : Matt Kramer's Making Sense Of Italian Wine before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Matt Kramer's Making Sense Of Italian Wine:

42 of 43 people found the following review helpful. Veni, vidi, viniBy Keith LevenbergThis is the most recent addition to Matt Kramer's "Making Sense" series of wine books. If you've read any of the others, you know that the dumbed-down "Making Sense" tag is a bit of a misnomer. The original Making Sense of Wine is one of the most intellectual wine books ever written, with thoughtful chapters on the nature of connoisseurship, the importance of typicity of place, and wine's changing role at the dinner table throughout history. And then there is Kramer's rare, inexplicably out-of-print Making Sense of Burgundy, which costs north of \$100 if you can find it... rather like a prized

Burgundy itself. For better or worse, *Making Sense of Italian Wine* doesn't continue this deceptive labeling. It's organized like a buyer's guide for beginners and indeed Kramer states flatly in the introduction: "This book is not intended for wine lovers who are already deeply knowledgeable about Italian wines.... Instead, this book is for relative newcomers to Italian wines. It's for everyone who has enjoyed a bottle recommended to them in an Italian restaurant and would like a little guidance about how to go about having another such delicious experience." The majority of the book consists of overviews of about 40 different types of Italian wine, broken down, for each category, into a brief history, a list of recommended producers, an overview of the cuisine typically served with the wines in Italy, various vital stats, and references to similar wine types. The culinary descriptions are particularly refreshing because they don't degenerate into any of the customary voodoo about what micro-elements in the wine and food "pair" with each other in whatever barely noticeable ways. Instead, Kramer just describes, quite evocatively, what the locals eat, so the result is a small lesson in culture rather than the usual dinner-table dogma. The 40 wine categories cover about as much breadth as you can expect in a book of 250 pages without very much depth for any particular type. (Big guns like Barolo get 20 pages tops, mostly producer descriptions.) It's tempting to skip through a lot of this, but the fact is that Kramer has a real knack for isolating distinctive producers and tying their wine into the kind of story you want to retell to your friends when you have a glass of it in front of you. There's Saracco's Moscato d'Asti, for example, which Kramer describes as the closest thing on the commercial market to the genuine old-time Moscato d'Asti--the kind that was filtered through a sock and would often spontaneously explode in producers' cellars. If every chapter had a recommendation as on the mark and interesting as that one, the book would be indispensable, but unfortunately a lot of chapters seem to cry out for more flesh on the bones. The three introductory essays are the emotional heart of the book in that they reveal Kramer having a real passion for the subject, rather than just a lot of expertise. The first is titled "Bella Figura--The Italian Love of the Beautiful Gesture" and is a warm account of the Italian obsession for the seemingly insignificant flourish designed to project the perfect image. For some producers, their "bella figura" is a fancy label or a heavy bottle; for others it's new oak barrels--"except for those traditionalist producers who, in a kind of jujitsu move, make the absence of small oak barrels their bella figura." Seen that way, suddenly it makes sense how both approaches can seem quintessentially Italian.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful book. By S. Newton This is a wonderful book. I was already familiar with many Italian wines, but my knowledge and experience with them was scattered. This book put so many things into perspective for me. I went to Italy for the first time last September and now reading this book, I can look back and better understand and appreciate what I saw then. The organization of the book is outstanding. The book has identified several wines of interest which I have now tried with great enjoyment. Kramer's writing style is not only informative, but he can turn a phrase and I found myself smiling at several points and then found myself looking for the next clever piece of writing. This book has also triggered a desire to learn more about Italian wines and I have started reading the Joe Bastianich book as a follow up. This book is a home run.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Matt does it again. By Heitor V. Almeida This is a great book, even though it is not as ambitious as the California and Burgundy books. Matt Kramer focuses on the most important and easiest to find Italian wines, but he really gets to the bottom of what makes them great, or not. If you want to know why a 20-dollar Chianti normale from a great producer is way more exciting than a 200-dollar Sassicaia, you must read this book! The only downside is that the book is not a complete guide of Italian wine. For that, you can get *Vino Italiano*. But Matt's informed, intellectual view of Italian wine is unique, and really irreplaceable. If you love Italian wine, you must own this book.

Matt Kramer, longtime *Wine Spectator* columnist and author of the classic *Making Sense* series of wine books, now turns his palate toward Italy. Though Italian wine is the most popular wine among consumers, it remains puzzling to most wine lovers who wouldn't know a Barolo from a Barbaresco. Though shrouded in mystery, Italian wine has some of the most exciting and affordable varieties being produced today. Kramer is a trusted companion in the wine store, telling his readers the essentials: which wines can't be missed, and which are safe to skip. Organized like a "Shoppers' Guide," this unique book offers the lowdown on the most dazzling wines in every price range--their regions, traditions, and which foods to match with them. With Kramer's trademark wit and intelligence, here is an invaluable tool to finding treasures in the local wine shop.

"There's a way out of the Italian wine thicket. But like a Dobos torte, Italy is too rich to ever be simple. You've got to take it on, layer by delicious layer, accepting the fact that the only way out is, paradoxically, to dive in." About the Author Matt Kramer has been a full-time food and wine writer since 1976. His columns appear in every issue of *Wine Spectator* and *Diversion* magazines. He is also the longtime wine critic for *The Oregonian* and previously a wine columnist for *The Los Angeles Times*. Kramer is the author of the *Making Sense* series, which includes *Matt Kramer's New California Wine*, *Making Sense of Burgundy* and *The classic Making Sense of Wine*.