

## EXTRA BOOKS

## Worth their weight in wine

**James Halliday's Australian Wine Companion 2008 Edition**  
James Halliday  
(Hardie Grant Books, \$32.95)



**Taste Food & Wine 2008**  
Matthew Jukes/  
Tyson Stelzer  
(Wine Press, \$19.95)



**The Juice 2008**  
Matt Skinner  
Beasley, \$19.95)



**Quaff 2008**  
Peter Forrestal  
(Hardie Grant Books, \$19.95)



**Don't Buy Wine Without Me 2008**  
Ken Gargett  
(Text Publishing, \$27.95)



**Wine: What To Drink 2008**  
Toni Paterson  
(Random House, \$22.95)



**The Australian Wine Annual 2008**  
Jeremy Oliver  
(Jeremy Oliver, \$27.95)



**How To Taste Wine**  
Len Evans  
(Barbara Beckett Publishing, \$19.95)



**A Good Nose And Great Legs**  
Robert Geddes  
(Murdoch Books, \$39.95)



**Why The French Hate Us**  
Campbell Mattinson  
(Hardie Grant Books, \$28.95)



WALK into any bottle shop and you are likely to be confronted by myriad choices; grape varieties, vintages, labels, even wines from several countries. Stroll around any bookshop and the selection process is almost as difficult. Australian vinophiles are spoiled for choice with close to a dozen new wine books jostling for attention and shelf space.

It pays to do some research and know what you need from a wine book before flashing cash that could otherwise go towards a very good bottle of chardonnay, because there is something for everyone, from Rob Geddes's informative *A Good Nose And Good Legs*, to Campbell Mattinson's hugely entertaining *Why The French Hate Us*.

*James Halliday's Australian Wine Companion*, by the doyen of Australian wine writers, is a vital tool for serious drinkers. The 2008 edition provides a comprehensive rundown of Australia's leading wineries and their best wines and contains a staggering 5836 tasting notes.

The gospel according to chief sniffer and spitter Halliday is revised and updated annually, although many current release wines failed to make the deadline.

It's a work of immense depth and breadth, a useful companion to anyone who is already in the grip of the grape, visiting a wine region or planning cellar replenishment – but its size and scope make it rather less useful to those still struggling to learn the difference between pinot noir and pinot gris.

Far more useful for wine drinkers feeling their way, and working within a budget, are the likes of Peter Forrestal's *Quaff*, Ken Gargett's *Don't Buy Wine Without Me*, Matt Skinner's *The Juice* and Matthew Jukes and Tyson Stelzer's *Taste: Food & Wine*.

Jukes and Stelzer's book is jam-packed with useful information about some of the best wines to buy, food and wine matchings, the best wine retailers in Australia and New Zealand and a listing of the best producers in the country.

Anyone looking to learn a lot in a short time would do well to grab a copy and learn from the expertise of British-based Jukes and young Australian Stelzer, who write in a bright and breezy style with absolutely no pretence.

Skinner's *The Juice* is also easy to



Industry doyen ... James Halliday judging at a Hunter Valley wine show. Photo: Ryan Osland

read but is a very different animal; listing just 100 Australian and New Zealand wines worth drinking; information that most casual wine drinkers should have been able to glean from newspapers and magazines.

Skinner, a knowledgeable young Melbourne mop top who is chef Jamie Oliver's wine man, has put together a fun guide for beginners, brightly laid out in a modern format, but without a whole lot of substance. It's an ideal stocking filler for someone who is keen on wine and could use a few tips.

While UK-based Skinner's selection of Peter Lehmann Wines as his best wine buy, the Yalumba Y Series 2006 Riesling, has since been superseded by an equally good 07. Forrestal and Gargett, meanwhile,

appear to be pitching to much the same market. Forrestal's *Quaff 2008* focuses on the best wines in Australia for less than \$15 – and is an invaluable guide through the maze of labels and special offers that can befuddle any neophyte. Forrestal, former editor of the *Gourmet Traveller Wine* magazine, lists more than 400 good-value wines, both Australian and imported, that are widely available in local stores. He lists 100 more expensive wines worth tracking down, some food and wine tips and a list of good retailers.

Forrestal also offers added value by sending out weekly email updates of wine bargains, which means his readers are kept up to date throughout the year.

Former Brisbane legal eagle Gargett, who writes on wine for a

number of publications including *The Courier-Mail*, has taken over from Stuart Gregor as the author of *Don't Buy Wine Without Me* and nearly all the 250 wines he recommends retail for \$25 or less. That seems an eminently sensible cut-off point because, as Gargett points out, the days of bargain buys have vanished and it pays to shop wisely.

Yalumba is Gargett's winery of the year and the Peter Lehmann 07 Eden Valley Riesling is his best-value white. Wine writers rarely agree on anything, so this wine is a certain winner. There's a bright and easy to read layout and Gargett has a nice relaxed style of writing.

Toni Patterson's *What To Drink 2008* also lists around 250 of the best buys around for under \$25 and as Australia's only female Master of Wine she brings a wide depth of knowledge to her selections.

Jeremy Oliver's self-published *Australian Wine Annual 2008* is for more serious drinkers. With the top wineries in the country listed alphabetically, Oliver offers ratings of recent vintages and a guide to when most of the wines will be at their best.

The last book from the late Len Evans, *How To Taste Wine*, has seen him leave a legacy on the essentials of wine tasting, while Master of Wine Geddes's book is aimed at readers who know a little about wine but want to learn a lot more. "Consumers wanting to know what wine to buy are well served," Geddes writes.

"I wanted my book to capture a taste of the times and to help readers understand there are three codes to understanding wine: person, place and the grape variety."

Geddes's book contains no ratings, no tasting notes and no vintage ratings, but a lot of useful information and good sense. There's a lot here for even the most experienced drinker.

Probably the best read of the new crop of releases is Mattinson's *Why The French Hate Us: The Real Story Of Australian Wine*.

Mattinson is a terrific writer, passionate about his subject and tells the story of how the Australian wine industry forged a formidable international reputation.

He knows his wine, and the people involved, inside out. It's compelling stuff for anyone interested in the subject.

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