The Juice: Vinous Veritas

Jay McInerney
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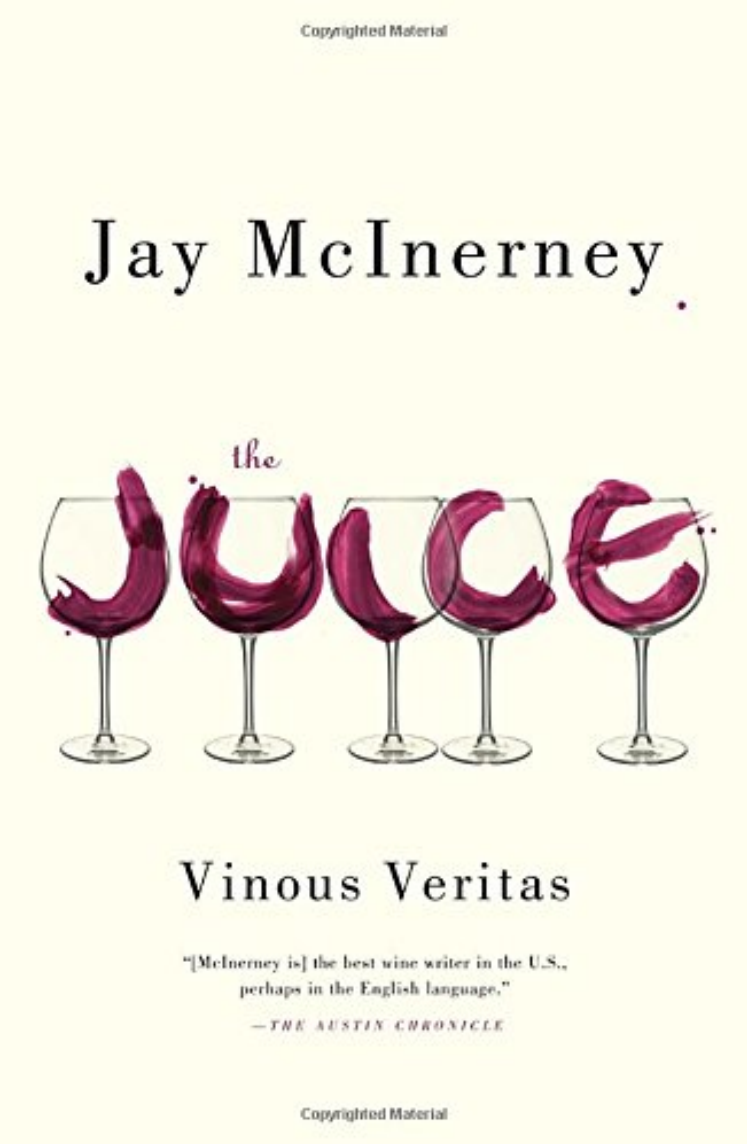

#91963 in Books Jay McInerney 2013-04-09 2013-04-09Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x .64 x 5.17l, .52 #File Name: 0307948056304 pagesThe Juice Vinous Veritas | File size: 18.Mb

Jay McInerney : The Juice: Vinous Veritas before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Juice: Vinous Veritas:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. If you like wine, this is for you!By CustomerThis book details the author's journey of discovery about wine and all that entails. It is full of anecdotes about wine, winemakers, wine-inspired meals, and a whole lot more. It's one of those books that you can pick up and read a chapter at a time and then tuck away for another day. I browsed it off and on for almost a year, and found it just as enjoyable each time I picked

it up. It was like a complex wine - it presented differently when I first opened it than it did when it had a chance to open up.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Informative!By B. SwitzerA bit heavy on drink and food at the end, but it is an informative view of the wine industry.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fun read for the wine loverBy Dog loverGreat book to read on vacation or a long plane ride. Jay Mcinerney does a great job maintaining levity throughout the book so it is informative yet unpretentious. I was jealous of the all of the amazing wines he has drunk over the years!!

A generous new collection by the acclaimed novelist who, according to Salon, is also "the best wine writer in America."For more than a decade, Jay McInerney's vinous essays have been praised by restaurateurs ("educational and delicious at the same time" Mario Batali), by esteemed critics ("brilliant, witty, comical, and often shamelessly candid and provocative" Robert Parker), and by the media ("McInerney's wine judgments are sound, his anecdotes witty, and his literary references impeccable" The New York Times). Here, in pieces originally published in House Garden and The Wall Street Journal, McInerney provides a master class in the almost infinite varieties of wine and the people and places that produce it, with the trademark style and expertise that prompted the James Beard Foundation to grant him the M.F.K. Fisher Award for Distinguished Writing in 2006.

It is a pleasure to see the wine world through a novelists playful eyes, and to feel the infectious joy he finds in great wines, places and personalities from around the world. Eric Asimov, The New York Times As bracing as high-acid Riesling . . . McInerney the novelist, with his eye for detail and smart aleck wit, is never far from the page, [and] he's able to get inside each destination and suss out what makes it interesting. The Washington Post Book World [McInerney] provides some of the finest writing on the subject of wine. . . . Brilliant, witty, comical, and often shamelessly provocative. Robert M. Parker, Jr. McInerney has become the best wine writer in America. Salon.com To the fruity, buttery world of wine writing, theres nothing else like it. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Were fortunate that Jay McInerney has chosen to shower his immense gifts on a new source of pleasure: the grape. . . . Hes a wry companion who is clearly at home with and enjoying the subject. Danny MeyerAbout the AuthorJay McInerney lives in Manhattan and Bridgehampton, New York. He writes a wine column for The Wall Street Journal and is a regular contributor to The Guardian and Corriere della Sera, and his fiction has appeared in The New Yorker, Esquire, Playboy, Granta, and The Paris . In 2006, Time cited Bright Lights, Big City as one of nine generation-defining novels of the twentieth century, and The Good Life received the Prix Littraire at the Deauville Film Festival in 2007. How It Ended: New and Collected Stories (2009) reminds us, Sam Tanenhaus wrote in The New York Times Book , how impressively broad McInerneys scope has been and how confidently he has ranged across wide swaths of our national experience."Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.IntroductionIt all began with Hemingway, as so many things do. Specifically with The Sun Also Rises, or, as the Brits call it, Fiesta. The latter title being apposite, because part of what I carried away from that book in my youth was the sense that drinking wine was cool and sophisticated. And lets face it, this is one of the reasons we read books, especially in our youth, particularly books by Hemingway and Kerouac and Lawrence Durrell: to find out how to live and how to pose and where to travel and what to eat and drink and smoke along the way. Everybody in Hemingways first novel is drinking wine. Not long after my vicarious adventures in Pam- plona, this sense of wine as an appurtenance of the well-lived life was reinforced by Evelyn Waughs Brideshead Revisited, with Charles Ryder and Sebastian Flyte picturesquely draining the cel- lar at that estate over the course of a summer. I was so fixated on the wine and the scenery that I dont think I bothered to grasp the nature of their friendship. Not very Hemingwayesque, but again, for some reason I remember the wine . . .The fact that wine had no place on my parents suburban dining table seemed to confirm its consumption as a mark of sophistication. They and their friends drank cocktailsmartinis, Manhattans, old-fashioneds, and stingers. And when they drank enough of them, they behaved badly, especially when they were in their stingers period, though this didnt strike me as romantic or chic. Much later I realized they were acting like the people in John Cheevers stories, once I finally got around to reading them; in fact it took me years to appreciate his writing, in part because his characters resembled my parents and their friends.Hemingway was a great fan of Spanish rosado, which might be why, on my very first date, at the age of sixteen, I ordered a bottle of Mateus rose, the spritzy Portuguese pink that came in a Buddha-shaped bottle. Never have I felt quite so worldly as I did that night at the Log Cabin Restaurant in Lenox, Massachusetts, as I sniffed the cork and nodded to the waiter. Many of my college romances were initiated over a bottle of Chateauneuf-du-Pape, the only red wine whose name I could remember, but while lurching toward adulthood, I preferred quicker fixes, partly in the semicon- scious belief, suggested by so much of my reading, that the road of excess would lead to the palace of wisdom, that the pursuit of an artistic career as a writer required a strictly Dionysian regi- men. Manhattan in the early eighties was a congenial venue for this aesthetic program, especially if your role models included Baudelaire, Dylan Thomas, Keith Richards, and Tom Verlaine. I worked at menial editorial jobs and, briefly, as a fact-checker for The New Yorker as I did my best to infiltrate the downtown night- club scene, which I imagined to be the contemporary equivalent of Isherwoods Berlin or Lautrecs Montmartre.Not long after I was fired by The New Yorker, I was awakened at the crack of 2:00 p.m. by a call from my best friend, who informed me

that Raymond Carver was en route to my apartment. You could have knocked me over with a rolled-up twenty-dollar bill, several of which were lying on my bedside table. Jesus Christ! Raymond Carver on my doorstep? Granted, there was some context here: my best friend, Gary Fisketjon, a junior editor at Random House, had reviewed a chapbook by Carver for The Village Voice and, through his legendary champion Gordon Lish, had gotten to know him. (He would later become Carvers editor, as well as my own.) Some years before, when we were at Williams College, I lent Gary a book called Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?, and since then wed both been passionate Carver fans. Now Gary was returning the favor with interest. Theyd had lunch together, and Carver had nothing to do until his reading at Columbia that evening, so Gary volunteered my services as a tour guide for the afternoon, assuming that I would be thrilled. Which I was, despite an apocalyptic headache. The buzzer rang, an indistinct mumble came through the intercomand then the doorway was filled by this hulking, slouching bear whom I ushered in to a tiny Greenwich Village apartment that showed all the signs of an arduous, recently terminated binge. We never got around to touring the city and instead talked for four or five hours, mostly about writing, until it was well past time to get Carver to his reading. At some point he said, almost apologetically, I dont know, the life youre living here doesnt seem exactly conducive to writing. While it didnt take a master storyteller to make this observation, from him it sounded like an epiphany. Carver knew whereof he spoke, a devotee of Alcoholics Anonymous who credited that organization with saving his life. Six months later I moved to Syracuse to study with Ray and clean up my act.Having heard nutritionists distinguish between good fats and bad fats, I would propose a similar dichotomy for intoxicants. Certainly this was the opinion of Thomas Jefferson, the nations first wine geek. No nation is drunken where wine is cheap, he declared, and none sober where the dearness of wine substitutes ardent spirits as the common beverage. It is, in truth, the only antidote to the bane of whiskey. Or vodka, I might add. One cant help but wonder how different Russias history might have been if the country was warm enough for viticulture. Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world, Hemingway wrote in Death in the Afternoon, and one of the natural things of the world that has been brought to the greatest perfection, and it offers a greater range for enjoyment and appreciation than, possibly, any other purely sensory thing. Not his greatest prose, perhaps, and like so many encomiums to winethe earnest Jeffersons springs to mindit leaves out the buzz factor. (They dont, for example, call them winos for nothing.)Still, it impressed me at the time, especially since Id discovered that the bane of whiskey and the road of excess hadnt led me to any palaces at all.But Syracuse was leading me in far more rewarding directions, in large part thanks to Ray and Tobias Wolff demonstrating how to advance from apprenticeship into actual writing. To supplement my fellowshiptuition plus four grand a yearI worked as a clerk in the Westcott Cordial Shop, whose Princeton-educated proprietor had an extensive wine library and high hopes for the scabrous neighborhoods eventual gentrification. Here I could oscillate between the stories of Isaac Babel and Hugh Johnsons World Atlas of Wine, dip into the stock after finishing my shift, and gradually refine my rudimentary palate.This is also where I got the call, some two years on, that my novel had been bought by Random House, and a subsequent one from a guy who kept calling me babe and wanted to fly me out to Hollywood to meet with his fellow executives at Paramount. Well put you up at the Chateau Marmont, he said. Is that good? I asked. Its better than good, he assured me. John Belushi died there. Clearly hed read Bright Lights, Big City, or at least the cov- erage of the book, and formed an opinion of my bad habits.A decade later, I was able to merge these double-barreled habits of wine and writing. My friend Dominique Browning, in charge of resurrecting Conde Nasts House Garden, knew of my devel- oping vinous passion, invited me to do a monthly column, and proceeded to send me pretty much any place in the world where I thought there was a good wine storya master-class education I am profoundly grateful for, and one that would be hard to imagine in this era of editorial budget slashing and whats beginning to look like the mass extinction of general-interest publications. Indeed, somewhat ahead of the curve, House Garden was shut down in 2007. Sad as I was about its demise and my friends misfortune, I reasoned that it had been a hell of a good run. Id never intended to write about wine for more than a year or two, and it was time to turn all my energies back to fiction. And so I did until, a couple of years later, The Wall Street Journal came calling. A few of the following essays, much revised here, date back to Dominiques magazine, and most from my current gig. One of them, a review of Robert Mondavis autobiography published in The New Yorker, seemed very much worth reprinting here in the wake of his passing. The world of wine would likely lookand tastevery different if not for Mondavi, whom I was fortunate enough to spend time with on several occasions.Heraclitus tells us you can never step into the same river twice, for other waters are ever flowing on to you. And likewise, it seems to me, you can never really drink the same wine twice. The appreciation of wine, for all that we might try to quantify it, is in the end a subjective experience. More than a poem or a painting or a concerto, which is problematic enough for the aesthetician, the 1982 La Mission, say, or the 1999 Beaucastel is a moving target. Good wine continues to grow and develop in the glass and in the bottle, to change from one day to the next in response to baro- metric pressures and other variables; moreover, any given wine from the same maker, the same vintage, even the same barrelis subject to our own quirks of receptivity, to the place and the com- pany in which we drink it, to the knowledge we bring with us, and to the food with which we pair it. Even so, in order to develop our appreciation, we agree to a fictional objectivity and attempt to iso- late wine from these contextual variables, to treat each and every glass in front of us as if it contained a stable and quantifiable sub- stance. We Americans are often scolded for adhering to this view, and one critic in particular has been accused of reducing wines infinite variety and

complexity to a vulgar game of numbers. On the other hand, the felon in question, Robert Parker, has helped to democratize and demystify something that until very recently was stuffy, arcane, and elitist. His core beliefthat wine can be evaluated and graded like any other consumer productwas hugely liberating for those of us on both sides of the Atlantic who wanted to penetrate the mysteries of the great French growths. And it took this middle-class lawyer, whod grown up drinking soft drinks with meals, to begin to clear away the musty, upper-class stench of oenophilia.Ive learned quite a bit in the last fifteen years, and my tastes have shifted accordingly (if sometimes mystifyingly). Burgundy has become something of an obsession, and there are more than a few essaysan entire section, actuallydevoted to the fickle, intermittently exhilarating, and heartbreaking wines of that region. But I still love Bordeaux, not only the famous wines, but also the Crus Bourgeois from relatively obscure corners like Fronsac and Lalande-de-Pomerol, which represent tremendous value in the face of the madly escalating prices of the classed growths from the 2009 and 2010 vintages. Just when I think my interest in California is flagging, I taste a new wine like Steve Matthiassons white blend or an old one like Araujos 1995 Eisele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon and get excited all over again. Italy now accounts for about a third of American wine imports and for me remains a continuing source of wonder and pleasure. Spain might well be the new Italy, a country with a long history of wine making thats finally waking up to its potential. Something similar is happening in South Africa, which has a wine-making tradition extending back to the seventeenth century. Some of the wines I write about here are costly and hard to find, but I believe its one of the wine writers duties, however arduous it might sound, to bring back news of the best and the rarest, just as its the travel writers duty to explore exotic and remote destina- tions. Most readers of automotive magazines wont ever drive a Lamborghini or a Ferrari, and most wine drinkers will never hold a glass of Chateau Latour, but as an avid reader of Car and Driver Id hate to see it limit its coverage to sensible, affordable rides. No, I want a knowledgeable, badass driver to tell me what its like to power the new Gallardo Superleggera through the Alps. So, yes, theres some wine porn here. That said, some of the most surpris- ing and exciting moments involve obscure and undervalued wines like the 2007 Movia Pinot Grigio from Slovenia or overachievers like the 2007 Chateau Jean Faux Bordeaux, which at $25 retail is $1,200 cheaper than the 2010 Latour.Much as I have ostensibly learned since I started writing about wine, and as lucky as I have been to have tasted some of the renowned vintages, Im not sure that Ive ever enjoyed a bot- tle of wine more than I did that Mateus rose back in the Berk- shires in 1972. Id lately acquired my drivers license and was in the company of my first love, with the night and the entire sum- mer stretched out ahead of me like a river full of fat, silvery, pink- fleshed rainbow trout. The wine tasted like summer, and it was about to become the taste of my first real kiss.