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RICHARD FRISBIE :: Good, Better, Best Wines - a book review

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Good, Better, Best – we're hung up on rating things in our lives. From restaurants, to past lovers, and even dance partners, we're obsessed with how they rank. In Good (\$5) Better (\$10) Best (\$15) Wines, author Carolyn Evans Hammond compares all types and in each price range. Join Gather's Food Correspondent Richard Frisbie as he tastes the results and tells you why you need the information in this book.

"the number one selling wine book on Amazon!"

Good, Better, Best Wines

by sommelier and wine blogger Carolyn Evans Hammond

Want to impress that special someone in your life? Want to show him or her that you can be frugal while serving wine that tastes good? Want to have the “right” wine to serve to your boss, or the inlaws? Good (\$5) Better (\$10) Best (\$15) Wines compares all types and in each price range. Author Carolyn Evans Hammond helps us clean up our act a bit by using this system to rate the most common and popular wines we buy every day.

This “wine-buyer’s bible” is accurately subtitled “A No-Nonsense Guide to Popular Wines”. Ms Hammond states in the introductory paragraphs that “talk of wine can quickly dwindle into mind-parchingly dry drivel”. Using the same refreshing-as-a-crisp-Albarino, pop-your-cork style throughout the book, she shows you how to always have the right wine for every occasion.

The reader quickly realizes that author Carolyn Evans Hammond means business. The only things dry in this book are some of the wines. In chapter after grape-variety-chapter the author compares chardonnays to chardonnays, Rieslings to Rieslings, and so on within similar price ranges until a chapter titled Other Great Whites. Having completed the whites, she turns around and does the same thing for the red grapes.

Like rose’ wines? She covers them too! Blends, dessert wines, and even bargain wines (including boxed) get their own chapters. She finds the good, better, and best wines of each. Each has a photograph to help easily identify it on the shelf, and each set of three on its own two page spread has a side-bar containing facts, history, notes, food pairings and pronunciation. There is no need to feel like a deer-in-the-headlights when browsing wine shop shelves or planning menus. You’ll know what you are talking about, what to order, and how much it should cost after reading her concise descriptions. Through it all her pithy and succinct writing will even keep you reading about wines you never plan to drink.

The primary focus of the author is to compare the most popular, commonly available wines Americans buy. Much is made of the fact that wines under \$15 a bottle are 97% of wine sales in the US. The only wines in the book over \$15 are the desserts and specialty wines that may be priced as high as \$30. (Most aren’t.) Since the most popular wine sold in the US is Franzia Winetaps *in a box*, at about \$5 per 750 ml, there is a huge need for the clear and simple instruction the author offers.

Good, Better, Best Wines (under \$5, \$10 and \$15 respectively) takes the mystery out of buying wine for every-day use. The chapter on Party Wine completes the package with sections on what to buy for cocktail, beach, wedding, and garden parties, even banquets. And at 4 ¼” x 7 ¼” it fits neatly in your bag for cribbing in the aisles of your favorite wine shop.

Good, Better, Best Wines -- A No-Nonsense Guide to Popular Wines

by Carolyn Evans Hammond

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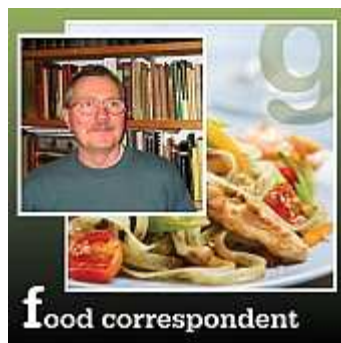
Richard Frisbie, FOOD Correspondent:

RICHARD FRISBIE is published twice a month to Gather Essentials: Food. It is a food junkie's take on growing, raising, preparing and - above all else - eating food. Together we'll explore the trends, addictions, equipment and regional specialties that make up the sometimes mundane and sometimes sublime cooking and dining experience. You can keep up with my other postings and Gather activity by joining my Gather network -- I look forward to hearing from you.

You can read all of my articles <http://rfrisbie.gather.com/> or find them with those of the other Food Correspondents, plus celebrity chef content and plenty of other Foodies at <http://foodtalk.gather.com>

DISCLAIMER - Richard Frisbie accepts free copies of books for review, restaurant meals to critique, bottles of wine and liquor for tastings, and all-expense-paid trips in exchange for articles about the destinations. He is paid for these articles.

BIO - Richard Frisbie writes culinary travel articles, is a columnist for his local newspapers, and is a regular contributor to the many Hudson Valley, Catskill Mountain and other regional New York publications. Online, he writes frequent articles for EDGE Publications, GoNomad and Travel Lady, as well as Gather.



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Comments: 13

[Sheryl O.](#) Aug 18, 2010, 4:24pm EDT

Sounds like my kind of wine book. I cannot imagine what a \$5 bottle of wine tastes like, though.

I'm a Chardonney drinker myself. I'm a bit miffed about the move to fruity Chardonneys right now. I have to hunt high and low for a decent oaky Chardonney at a reasonable price. Anytime I've enlisted someone at the shop, they give me the same story - not fashionable right now. Who cares about fashion?!? I want taste!

My husband, always a red wine enthusiast, has really latched onto the red blends out now. His favorite is Menage a Trois. It's about \$13/bottle, so he drinks it sparingly.

[Kathryn E.](#) Aug 18, 2010, 5:05pm EDT

NH has some quite decent wines for 5. NH is quite a bargain.

[Sheryl O.](#) Aug 18, 2010, 5:22pm EDT

I have visited your state liquor stores, Kathryn. I know what a deal they are! Unfortunately, it's a bit of a drive from CT.

[Richard Frisbie](#) Aug 20, 2010, 12:10pm EDT

There is a trader Joes in Danbury, CT. Have you been?

[Kathryn E.](#) Aug 18, 2010, 5:06pm EDT

Our grocery has had wine tastings on weekends for the past couple of years, with all imported wines and some California. I have really enjoyed it, not to mention a very slight buzz from 3 tastings of tiny cups per visit. Low low tolerance.

[Kathryn E.](#) Aug 18, 2010, 5:08pm EDT

Featured in the [Triple Name Club](#).

[Kathryn E.](#) Aug 18, 2010, 5:08pm EDT

Sounds like a very enjoyable book, one I would very much like.

[Mariana T.](#) Aug 19, 2010, 1:37pm EDT

hi Richard - Looks like a really neat book! I drink \$5.00 wine all the time - you can buy lots of good wines for \$5.00 - of course, I am a daily wine drinker - this book sounds really neat. Everyone around here is crazy about Menage a trois/a red - it's about \$10.

Thanks Richard again for so much good information. Salud

[Mariana T.](#) Aug 19, 2010, 1:40pm EDT

Thanks for posting to Chateaux Gatheraux - once I crank up the generator on this houseboat, I'll try to feature it. Seafood still good down here but not sure when the plankton will die off and there goes our delicate eco system - you'll know it when turtles come out with three heads instead of the normal two. Salud

[Mariana T.](#) Aug 19, 2010, 1:46pm EDT

Sheryl - too bad you don't live in California and go to Trader Joe's - there are lots of decent wines at Trader Joe's and not just Charles Shaw aka Two Buck Chuck - there's many and it's a good thing as it's near my Santa Barbara house and really enhanced my life with all the good products sold there. Salud

[Richard Frisbie](#) Aug 20, 2010, 12:07pm EDT

There is a trader Joes in Danbury, CT. Very clean, polite and well-stocked by all accounts (I haven't been yet.) Thanks for the heads up, Mariana.

[Carolyn Evans Hammond](#) Aug 20, 2010, 9:17am EDT

Hey, i know that book! I wrote it. Thanks for the review. So glad you like it! Cheers

[Richard Frisbie](#) Aug 20, 2010, 12:09pm EDT

Hello Carolyn. Always nice to hear from the author. I just looked in your book again for help with an after-concert reception wine pick. Great job organizing the book to be so helpful - thanks again!

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