

ONE BOTTLE: The 2004 Joseph Drouhin Pouilly-Fuissé & THE TEN BIGGEST LIES ABOUT WINE

by JOSHUA BAER

Some people think language was invented so people could lie to each other. As difficult as it is to agree with them, it's even more difficult to disagree. In Russia, where my father's people came from, they have a kindred saying: "A thought spoken is a lie." If that sounds harsh, try going a day without lying to the people you hate. If you make it, spend the next day trying not to lie to the people you love. It's easier said than done.

These days, certain individuals have mastered the art of lying by telling the truth. I'm not going to point fingers. Let's just say that candor does not have what you would call a stellar track record at either the box office or the voting booth. Maybe it's time for a new approach. Instead of using the truth to tell lies, maybe it's time to start using lies to tell the truth. In that spirit, *One Bottle* presents:

THE TEN BIGGEST LIES ABOUT WINE

#1. "The Napa Valley is one of the world's great wine-producing regions." Bullshit. I'm sorry, but there are better wine-producing regions in California, not to mention France and Italy. Right now, the Napa Valley is where General Motors was ten years ago: trying to market monotony as diversity. Napa's Cadillac, the estate-bottled Cabernet Sauvignon, is the world's most predictable wine. If Napa Valley winemakers spent half as much creativity making wine as they spend marketing it, their wines might taste better. But don't bet on it.

#2. "I don't like sweet wine." Yeah, right. And you never watch TV or visit porn sites, either. Kermit Lynch says that Americans "talk dry but drink sweet." Amen, Kermit. The reason California winemakers produce the kind of cloying, over-oaked Chardonnays that make Snapple® taste dry by comparison is demand. The American public has a sweet tooth. Winemakers pander to it. End of story.

#3. "You're drinking it too early." No I'm not. The great French vintages of the last twenty-five years were 1982, 1985, 1990, and 2000. All four vintages were delicious when young, and in spite of the self-styled experts who said the wines from those vintages wouldn't age well, they continue to improve with each year that goes by. If you like a wine when it's young, buy a case. Drink half and cellar the rest. You won't be disappointed.

#4. "French wine is overrated." Sure. So was Pablo Picasso. And the Beatles. And that Dylan guy. Americans are lucky to live in a world where we get to be the policemen and the French get to make the wine. God help us both if we ever reverse roles.

#5. "Perfect wines exist." Get over yourself. Robert Parker, editor of the *Wine Advocate*, is widely credited with making one hundred-point wines the icons of the wine world. Mr. Parker is an astute writer. He knows his own taste, and his ability to blur the line between objectivity and subjectivity has encouraged millions of people to discover their own respective tastes. Unfortunately, Mr. Parker's assertion that perfect wines not only exist but can be quantified is sophistry. It would take a perfect person to identify a perfect wine and nobody is perfect, not even Robert Parker. Wine pleases us because wine contains the same curious combination of attributes and flaws that we contain. Ask any anorexic. Perfection is a curse, not a blessing.

#6. "Young people don't appreciate wine." This one is a line extension of George Bernard Shaw's paean to cynicism: "Youth is wasted on the young." The lie overlooks the fact that, in countries where children and teenagers are allowed to taste wine, young adults consume the same amounts

of wine as old adults. If you have kids, buy magnums and share the good stuff with them. Being young is harder than it looks. Everyone deserves the mysterious reassurance that comes with a glass of good wine.

#7. "Rhône wines aren't in the same league with Bordeaux or Burgundies." Give me a break. In the life cycle of the wine collector, most collectors start with Champagne, then they discover red Bordeaux, then they move on to red and white Burgundies, and then they come home to the Rhônes. The wines of St. Joseph, Hermitage, and Chateaufort Du Pape cost less than wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy. Therefore, they're not as good? Just the opposite. Price has nothing to do with value.

#8. "Consecrated wine is a symbol of blood." This lie also appears on the *Ten Biggest Lies Of All Time*. It doesn't matter if you're Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Buddhist, New Age Airy Fairy, Secular Humanist, Born-Again Atheist, or Latter-Day Druid. When the word of God consecrates, the wine in the chalice becomes blood. Not a concept. Not an idea. Not a symbol. The real thing. The relationship between wine and blood predates Christianity. People are the salt of the earth. Wine is its blood.

#9. "Rosé wines aren't serious wines." Again with the bigotry. Prejudice requires big lies, and the prejudice against rosés is endemic among wine snobs. The good news is, this particular prejudice translates into low prices for tasty rosés. Try the 2004 Domaine Tempier Bandol Rosé or the 2004 Château de Lascaux Rosé. These are world class wines first and rosés second.

#10. "Wine tastes like food." Enough with the wild strawberries and the moldy tea leaves. Yes, wine complements food, and vice versa, but men complement women, and you don't hear anyone trying to describe a beautiful woman in terms of how much hair she's got on her chest. Wine is an experience. Let's talk about it like one. In the same way that a good joke or a good story alludes to life without trying to explain it, a good wine alludes to food without trying to taste like it.

Which brings us to the 2004 Joseph Drouhin *Pouilly-Fuissé*.

In the glass, Drouhin's *Pouilly-Fuissé* is like the golden light you see on the horizon ten minutes before sunrise. On the palate, the *Pouilly-Fuissé*'s flavors are clear without being obvious. The finish has a strength that survives the taste of the finish. This is a wine of generosity and grace. Drinking it is one of life's honest pleasures, but don't take my word for it. Find a bottle and taste the truth for yourself. ♦

One Bottle is dedicated to the appreciation of good wine and good times, one bottle at a time. The name *One Bottle*, and the contents of this column, are © 2006 by onebottle.com. If you need help finding a wine or building a cellar, write to Joshua Baer at jb@onebottle.com.

