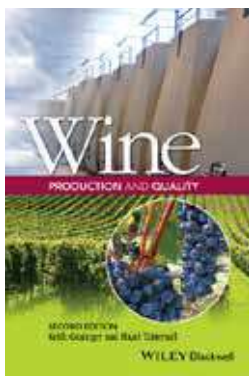


Book review by **Robert Smyth**



**Keith Grainger and Hazel Tattersall:**  
*Wine Production and Quality*  
(Second Edition)  
Wiley Blackwell, £65,  
307 pages, hardback

**W**ine *Production and Quality* is effectively an amalgamated and considerably expanded second edition of two earlier works: *Wine Production: Vine to Bottle* (2005) by the same two authors and *Wine Quality: Tasting and Selection* (2009), the latter a solo effort by Keith. It is a smart move to combine the two subjects and relate them to each other, particularly as they are such a natural fit with wine production naturally having such a profound impact on quality. It also provides a logical structure for the book that makes it simple to navigate via following the process of grape growing and winemaking, all the way from the grapevine to the glass.

The two parts that total 26 chapters are packed with useful information that is easy to digest and divided up into manageable chunks. Part 1 of the book looks at wine production, from vine to bottle, considering the impact of natural factors, including climate and soil, together with the decisions made and work undertaken in the vineyard and winery. Part 2 tackles quality in wines, by detailing the concepts and techniques of tasting, along with the challenges in recognising and assessing quality. It also examines the steps producers may take, and interestingly the limitations (such as financial) they may face, in creating quality wines.

I found myself dipping into *Wine Production and Quality* over the course of several days with wine-related queries relating to my own writing tasks. I was impressed at how quickly I could find answers that nailed exactly what I was looking for. Indeed, the authors excel in communicating complex processes in language that is straightforward to comprehend, without being guilty of over simplification. Given the conciseness and readability of the explanations, it comes as no surprise that Helen is a wine educator and Keith is both a winemaker and a wine educator. The style is also so approachable that it is worth ploughing through it from cover to cover to gain a rounded understanding of the whole process. It is also impressively up-to-date and nicely describes how perceptions of quality have changed over the years. Furthermore, while quite small, the colour pictures are highly effective in backing up the text, something which is often not successfully achieved in educational wine books.

The book is full of useful nuggets of information on hot topics. For example, there's a handy entry on Rudolf Steiner in the section on biodynamic winemaking. Keith and Hazel also make sure to present both sides whenever a controversial topic arises, never falling into the trap of setting up a straw man argument. With biodynamic winemaking, they acknowledge that many great wines are made through biodynamic methods, but ultimately pose the question: "Is the quality because of the biodynamic production, or is it

that the producers totally understand their terroir and their vines, take so much care and give every attention to detail?" They do however take a strong stance on the predominantly New World view that the diesel or kerosene nose caused by 1,1,6-Trimethyl-1,2-dihydronaphthalene in Riesling is a flaw. "In common with many other wine writers, we disagree, finding such a nose part of the individual, sensuous character of this most distinctive of varieties," they assert. I particularly enjoyed it when they expressed their opinions, which brought an extra dimension to the text and this could have been done a bit more often – even though their job is to educate and not to pontificate.

Overall, *Wine Production and Quality* is an invaluable resource for those studying towards wine exams, particularly the WSET Diploma, describing all students need to know in order to excel in especially the wine production and tasting exams, offering plenty of useful tips on the tasting side. It is also a great choice for various wine industry professionals, even for those considering entering the production side, and indeed for wine nerds in general. It is just the kind of book for us wine writers to use as a reference tool when trying to get our heads around some of the tricky technological and grape growing terms and processes. While *Wine Production and Quality* may carry something of a hefty price tag, it is still very much worth it for those dealing with wine on a day-to-day basis.



*Not a true representation...*