



The Emperor of Wine: The Rise of Robert M. Parker, Jr., and the Reign of American Taste

Elin McCoy

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The first book to chronicle the rise of Robert M. Parker, Jr., the world's most influential and controversial wine critic, who, over the last twenty-five years, has dominated the international wine world and embodied the triumph of American taste.

This is the story of how an American lawyer raised on Coca-Cola caused a revolution in the way wines around the globe are made, sold, and talked about.

To his legions of fans, Parker is a cross between Julia Child and Ralph Nader — part enthusiastic sensualist and part consumer crusader. To his many enemies, he is a self-appointed wine judge bent on reducing the meaning of wine to a two-digit number. The man who now rules the world of wine has been the focus of both adulation and death threats. He rose to his pinnacle of power by means of the traditional American virtues of hard work, determination, and integrity — coupled with an unshakeable ego and a maniacal obsession with a beverage that aspires to a seductive art form: fine wine.

Parker's influential bimonthly newsletter, *The Wine Advocate*, with more than 45,000 subscribers across the United States and in more than thirty-seven countries, exerts the single most significant influence on consumers' wine-buying habits and trends in America, Europe, and the Far East, and impacts the way wine is being made in every wine-producing country in the world, from France to Australia. Parker has been profiled in countless magazines and newspapers around the world and most of his dozen books have been best sellers in the United States and abroad. Yet, despite the world's attention and unending acclaim, Robert Parker stands at the center of a heated controversy. Is he a passionate lover of wine who, more than anyone else, is responsible for its vastly improved quality, or is he, as others claim, waging a war against centuries of tradition and in the process killing the soul of wine?

The Emperor of Wine tackles the myriad questions that swirl about Parker and reveals how he became both worshipped and despised, revered as an infallible palate by some and blamed by others for remaking the world's wine industry into a single global market, causing prices to skyrocket, and single-handedly reshaping the taste of wine to his own preference.

Elin McCoy met Robert Parker in 1981 when she was his first magazine editor, and she has followed his extraordinary rise ever since. In telling Parker's story, McCoy gives readers an unmatched, authoritative insider's view of the eccentric personalities, bitter feuds, controversies, passions, payoffs, and secrets of the wine world, explaining how wine reputations are made, how and why wine critics agree and disagree, and tracking the startling ways wines are judged, promoted, made, and sold today. This fascinating portrait of a modern-day cultural colossus shows how a world that once was the province of gentlemen's clubs and the pastime of stuffed shirts turned into a sensual hobby for the middle class, creating a luxury industry bent on making money on a worldwide scale — and how one man has revolutionized the way the world thinks about wine.

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