

Foreword

When the Psalmist in the Old Testament sang of “wine that maketh glad the heart of man,” and when the New Testament commentator in Timothy advised us to “use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake,” they weren’t thinking of vintage charts, expensive decanters, temperature or humidity controls, special glasses and so forth. What they referred to was the straight forward substance of nature produced over the centuries by rugged men and women for the well-being and pleasure of family and friends.

It is to Philip Seldon’s credit that he has been able to capture that spirit in this present volume directed to the needs of those who enjoy wine and wish to know more about it; who seek good value for the money they spend; and who in general wish to increase the pleasure they believe wine can add to their lives. Mr. Seldon’s approach to the subject is pragmatic; and he is mercifully free from the mystification and mumbo-jumbo that frightens off many potential wine lovers.

We must recognize from the outset, of course, that wine is a highly subjective field. For example, it is a fact of life that the very matching of a luscious Sauternes with a pungent Roquefort cheese which brings cheers in Bordeaux may raise shocked eyebrows in New York. The pairing of red wine with fish, supposedly a classic error, is another instance. Many years ago, it chanced that the great George Lang was

examined for membership in the Confrérie de Chèvaliers du Tastevin at the same session I was; and one of his questions was “under what conditions would it be appropriate to serve a red wine with fish.” I was still pondering when George replied briskly, “when the fish is prepared with a red wine sauce, it would be appropriate to serve in the glass the same wine used in the sauce.”

On many food and wine questions, opinions legitimately differ, and the late Claude-Phillippe (at whose memorable Lucullus Circle dinners Philip Seldon and I shared many pleasant evenings over the years) used to delight precisely in creating lively controversy and in provoking animated discussion over issues of taste. At the wonderful dinners of the Commanderie de Bordeaux, Gregory Thomas, arguably the most impressive figure in the world of American gastronomy, to this day goes to great pains to stimulate good-natured exchanges in which the knowledgeable members enthusiastically lock horns over matters of taste, suitability and preference. If our opinions on this particular wine practice or about the merits of that particular wine writer differ, so much the better; we will all gain entertainment and knowledge in the discussion.

In that context, we all may read with pleasure and profit this useful volume which reflects with grace and candor Philip Seldon’s personal views and experiences. The most innocent beginner will not find it intimidating; and the most knowledgeable old hand will find new

information and provocative insights.

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Daniel Rose talks can be found on: www.danielrose.org