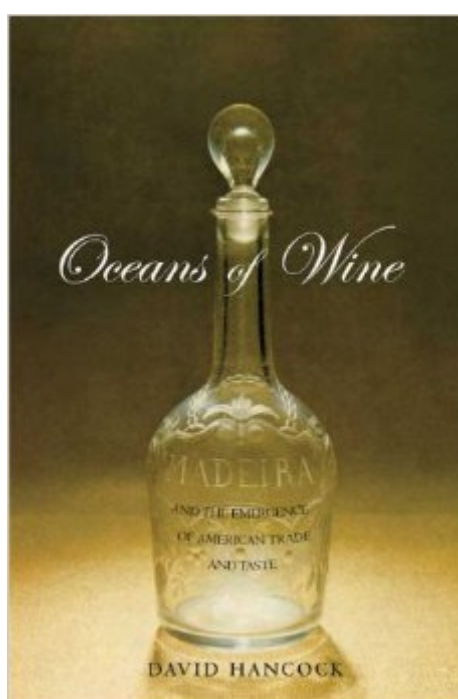


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Oceans Of Wine: Madeira And The Emergence Of American Trade And Taste (The Lewis Walpole Series In Eighteenth-Century Culture And History)



Synopsis

This innovative book examines how, between 1640 and 1815, the Portuguese Madeira wine trade shaped the Atlantic world and American society. David Hancock painstakingly reconstructs the lives of producers, distributors, and consumers, as well as the economic and social structures created by globalizing commerce, to reveal an intricate interplay between individuals and market forces. Wine lovers and Madeira enthusiasts will enjoy *Oceans of Wine*, as will historians interested in food, colonial trade, and the history of the Atlantic region. Using voluminous archives pertaining to wine, many of them previously unexamined, Hancock offers a dramatic new perspective on the economic and social development of the Atlantic world by challenging traditional interpretations that have identified states and empires as the driving force behind trade. He demonstrates convincingly just how decentralized the early modern commercial system was, as well as how self-organized, a system that emerged from the actions of market participants working across imperial lines. The networks they formed began as commercial structures and expanded into social and political systems that were conduits not only for wine but also for ideas about reform, revolution, and independence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hancock's *Oceans of Wine* is such a great book: why hasn't anyone else thought to write a really well-researched, but also well-written book on a wine? Too many of the well researched books are

stodgy, at best, and the well-written ones pretty thin. Hancock traces the rise of Madeira wine in the 18th century from its development in the island of Madeira -- where producers continually tried new techniques to improve its appeal to customers -- through several distribution layers to the final drinkers in British America -- where people used it to show their status and refinement. If you really want to know how international business was conducted before the 19th century, this book and Hancock's first book *Citizens of the World* are by far the most thorough and detailed. And readable, too.

The book *OCEANS OF WINE*, along with Alex Liddell's *MADEIRA*, were invaluable in preparing for a Madeira tasting. The former provides a rich history of understanding how a quite crude local table wine from a lonely Atlantic island during the mid-15th century evolved into a rich, fortified, sweet beverage of the young US nation's elite class - worthy of being the toasting beverage at the signing of the Declaration of Independence and George Washington's inauguration. No significant aspect of Madeira viniculture and viticulture development and refinement over the 3 ½ centuries from 1450 to 1815 are left out. The bonus is Mr. Hancock's research into previously unexamined merchant documents and forgotten archives on both sides of the Atlantic. The work reveals what role(s) Madeira played in the triangular Atlantic trade. Madeira's niche in development of the triangular Atlantic trading enterprises and the role America's Colonial settlers, merchants, traders, and even (franchise) retailers in developing expanding commercial markets is thoroughly examined. Whether your locus is Madeira the wine - and what part 18th & 19th century US tastes influenced long term Maderia styles - or what part Madeira the wine played in early American commercial endeavors, this exhaustive volume will satisfy your curiosities. Cerebral at times, but worth the work!

This examination of the Madeira trade is unnecessarily wordy, loosely organized, and is plagued with long awkward sentence construction. I found myself frequently stopping to re-read sentences, and when finally parsing them, realizing that the idea buried in the sentence was actually quite simple, and could have been conveyed in a more direct way. The notes are extensive, but more often than not filled with rambly tangents. I encountered a few half page notes which included no source support for the actual statement made in the text. I would expect Yale University Press to employ more able editors than they did in this case. Writing matters. Please respect your reader.

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