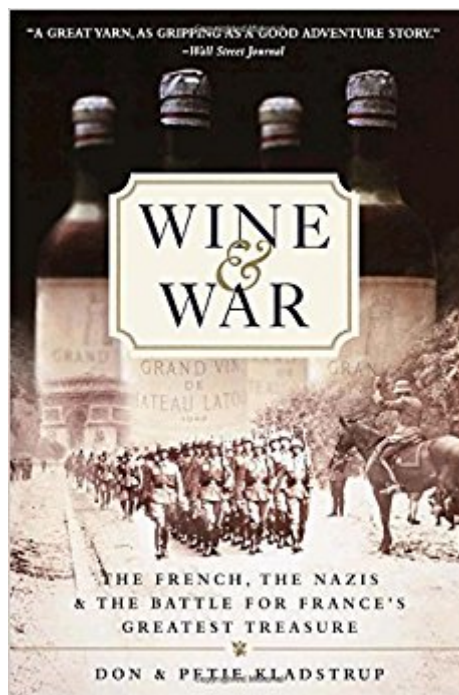




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# Wine And War: The French, The Nazis, And The Battle For France's Greatest Treasure



## Synopsis

The remarkable untold story of France's courageous, clever vintners who protected and rescued the country's most treasured commodity from German plunder during World War II. "To be a Frenchman means to fight for your country and its wine." —Claude Terrail, owner, Restaurant La Tour d'Argent In 1940, France fell to the Nazis and almost immediately the German army began a campaign of pillaging one of the assets the French hold most dear: their wine. Like others in the French Resistance, winemakers mobilized to oppose their occupiers, but the tale of their extraordinary efforts has remained largely unknown until now. This is the thrilling and harrowing story of the French wine producers who undertook ingenious, daring measures to save their cherished crops and bottles as the Germans closed in on them. *Wine and War* illuminates a compelling, little-known chapter of history, and stands as a tribute to extraordinary individuals who waged a battle that, in a very real way, saved the spirit of France.

## Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books (April 30, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0767904486

ISBN-13: 978-0767904483

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 322 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #25,159 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in Books > History > Europe > France #26 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Wine & Spirits > Wine #40 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Homebrewing, Distilling & Wine Making

## Customer Reviews

Liberty, equality, and fraternity are all well and good, a champion of French culture once remarked. But, he continued, what made France truly superior to its neighbors was the French passion for wine, which "contributed to the French race by giving it wit, gaiety, and good taste, qualities which set it profoundly apart from people who drink a lot of beer." The commentator may have had a point; after all, write Don and Petie Kladstrup, it was a well-known fact that Adolf Hitler did not like wine. Still, their leader's teetotalism notwithstanding, the Germans showed no distaste for French wine

when they invaded France in 1940. Indeed, among the first acts of the occupying army was to seize great stores of wine, sending tens of thousands of barrels to the Third Reich and ordering the conversion of thousands of hectares of vineyards into war production. Some French vintners, the Kladstrups write in this enjoyable study, went along with orders. Many others, however, including the heads of distinguished houses like Moët et Chandon, engaged in daring and dangerous acts of resistance wherever they could. Some lied about their yields; others built false walls to hide precious vintages; and still others concocted elaborate ruses, such as sprinkling carpet dust into inferior grades of new wine to give it a musty, distinguished flavor. Not every German was fooled, and some partisans of the grape died for their troubles. But some Germans, at considerable risk to themselves, also looked the other way. The Kladstrups fill their pages with memories of the wine war from both sides of the struggle, stories sometimes somber, sometimes amusing, that commemorate those "whose love of the grape and devotion to a way of life helped them survive and triumph over one of the darkest and most difficult chapters in French history." --Gregory McNamee

--This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

Husband-and-wife journalists and contributors to *Wine Spectator*, the Kladstrups recount the dangerous and daring exploits of those who fought to keep France's greatest treasure out of the hands of the Nazis. Whether they were fobbing off inferior wines on the Germans, hiding precious vintages behind hastily constructed walls, sabotaging shipments being sent out of France, or even sneaking people out of the country in wine barrels, the French proved to be remarkably versatile when it came to protecting their beloved wine. The authors craft a compelling read that shifts back and forth between individual tales of bravery, including those of five prominent wine-making families, and the bigger story of how World War II affected the French wine industry. This history should prove popular with readers who appreciated other books detailing the Nazis' looting of treasures, such as Tom Bower's *Nazi Gold* (LJ 5/15/97) and Hector Feliciano's *The Lost Museum* (LJ 8/97). Recommended for public and academic libraries. John Charles, Scottsdale P.L., AZ Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

I read "Wine and War" shortly after returning from a 3-week trip to France during which we became much more knowledgeable about French wines and their place in France's culture and history and *raison d'être*. Remnants of WWII still prevail, particularly in the historical center of the many small villages that we visited. Two aspects of France's rich history emerge repeatedly in the national conscience - the Revolution and the Occupation. The book covers the elaborate schemes enacted

by the French to protect their valuable cellars, their vineyards and their wine-making operations from the looting, gluttonous Germans. Germany actually established "Weinfuhrers" whose sole responsibility was to organize the sourcing, purchasing and shipment of wines from France to Germany. The French winemakers learned to seal off sections of their cellars to avoid detection, to sell the Germans only their inferior wines, to make new wines look like old wines by dusting the bottles, and many other techniques. A huge cache of fine wines was repatriated from Eagle's Nest at the end of the war in a bizarre and intricate wartime evacuation. Cases of wine were strapped onto stretchers and carefully lowered hundreds of meters to a waiting convoy of trucks. Soldiers stripped their tanks and trucks of non-essential equipment to make room for the precious cargo. This episode demonstrated the true reverence of the French for their sacred wines. It's a well-researched book. The final ~14% includes Footnotes, Bibliography, Glossary, etc. In the Epilogue the author discusses how some of the oldest and most respected wineries re-established themselves after the war. There is a lot of interesting history and culture in this book, not only about wine, but about the wine dynasties and the resistance movement that helped France to retain its dignity and reclaim the great heritage as the finest winemakers in the world. I really enjoyed reading about places we had visited during our tour. We enjoyed a wine tasting in a 13th century cellar in Beaune, the wine capital of Burgundy and I wondered whether it had been bricked off during the war to protect the inventory.

Oh, you kooky French winemakers! Nazis! I HATE those guys! This book has some incredibly amusing tales of courage and humor, all kidding aside. Some of these stories would drop right into a Tarantino movie no problem. Pretty good and fun read. I could never put my finger on why I've always admired the French, this book helps me understand that a little better. The two French girlfriends I've had did not help. They were both inscrutable. I think they like to call it "mysterious". It was not, it was frustrating. But they both smelled nice. I digress, this is a good book.

I came to this book as a WWII buff and as someone who appreciates wine. Actually, I am more of a beer drinker than a wine drinker. I was struck throughout this book by the reverence the French growers had for wine and the poetic heights they reached in describing their beloved wine. This contrasted with their contempt for the Nazis as beer-drinking louts. I meditated on the distinction between wine as a drink supposedly of the cultured and refined versus beer as a drink of the boorish lower class. Is this wine snobbery? Or is it simply a reflection of the fact that generally beer is less costly to produce and therefore a working man's drink? But in France, even the working man

drinks wine. Is it a matter of regional differences, as in Germany, where both wine and beer are produced? Or is there something intrinsically superior to wine as a civilizing influence, as the French seem to believe? That was the tantalizing question as I read this book, and I made sure to drink a bottle of French wine (Macon-Villages) as I read it. I can't say that I reached a definitive conclusion--more research is undoubtedly necessary, but I can say that this is an excellent book and a great historical read. The authors went to primary sources at many of the leading wine houses of France and backed that up with impressive archival research to tell this story. Anyone with an interest in this subject matter will not be disappointed with this book. Highly recommended.

A well organized and thought provoking read. I only put it down long enough to go out and purchase a mixed case of French wines.

Fascinating recount of the intersection between the wine producers of France and the third Reich. What happened during the war, how did the wine producers and wholesalers save their wine/fields while seemingly giving it up to the Germans. And consequently how did the sales and production of wine in France and then in Europe evolve because of these experiences. Not well written, sadly, but a well researched and interesting account. I have recommended it and sent it to many of my friends and family over the years.

What a great collection of recollections from one of the most tumultuous periods in history, especially for the French Wine Industry. Whilst the damage to the actual vineyards was not as severe as what occurred in WWI, WWII definitely had a significant impact on the wine industry, poor vintages, commandeering of wine by the occupiers, damage vineyards, etc. Well researched and written. Recommend any wine aficionado, historian or anyone who has an interest in understanding more about the occupation of France by Germany during WWII

A superb recounting of the trials and triumphs of the French winemakers as they dealt with the staggering demands of the top Nazis and the German nation as a whole. How they survived the lack of manpower, horsepower, needed materials and other challenges to maintaining their vineyards is well told. Also, how some of the very finest wines were successfully hidden and how the French were able to fob off sub-standard wines to fulfill orders for the German army and other organizations in the Reich show that the winemakers scored some victories against their foes. Very well written and researched, the book is both informative and entertaining.

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