



## WINE DOCTOR with Edward Finstein

# Why People Buy Certain Wines

When it comes to purchasing wine, exactly what influences a consumer's final decision? Aside from choosing a particular style to match a specific meal or situation, the criteria that dictate the purchase vary from person to person.

From what I see, at the top of the list has to be price. Let's face it; whether you're a luxury

wine purchaser or more of a commercial wine consumer, everybody is up for a great buy. If it's a good price and delivers decent or better quality, consumers of all income brackets and tastes are into it. Remember, price isn't always an indication of quality.

Next up would have to be critical acclaim and score. Since our school days, we have been hung up on scores and grades. If someone else, especially a wine critic like Robert Parker has tasted and scored a wine high, that score is often reason enough to purchase it. Some consumers might even put these criteria above price. Just keep in mind that not everyone's palate is the same, particularly when it comes to likes and dislikes. If you are going to follow a particular wine critic's advice, then make sure his or her palate and taste is similar to yours. By simply following a few of the critic's suggestions, you'll learn very quickly if your tastes are similar.

Third is provenance — where a wine comes from. Based more on reputation than anything else, specific regions of the world are definitely held in higher esteem than others. Places like Burgundy in France, Barossa Valley in Australia, and Napa Valley in California may certainly carry more weight for some consumers than lesser-known areas. However, some real gems can be overlooked this way, as there are often wines that are better from other places.

Reputation of a particular producer often plays a big role. Even if you're not

familiar with a specific wine from a well-respected producer like Mondavi from California, Torres from Spain, or Lehmann from Australia, for example, you can pretty much bet on the wine being fairly decent because of the general quality of that producer.

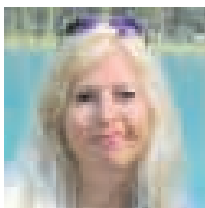
Along with reputation might be heritage. From your sipping history of a particular producer's wine, you know the style has remained consistent over the years and, more than likely, will continue to do so.

For some folks, especially the occasional luxury wine consumer, rarity of a product plays a role. Something unusual that every one is simply not sipping might be appealing. This smacks a bit of snobbery, but also keep in mind that many wines, although scarce, are not very good.

The final criterion that some consumers use to purchase wine is ethical responsibility. This is a good one. Such aspects as organic and biodynamic farming show that the producer cares about this planet and its future health. And, since growing grapes organically is more labor intensive and expensive, the producer also shows a commitment to quality. This environmental and social responsibility usually sits well with most consumers.

Whatever your criteria for purchasing wine, just don't lose sight of what wine is all about — a beverage that, when consumed in moderation, is part of a healthy lifestyle, does so much to enhance a meal, and stimulates social interaction.

Edward Finstein, "The Wine Doctor," ©2010. Catch Doc's weekly radio Wine Features on Boom 97.3 (formerly EZ Rock) on the FM dial every Wednesday between 5:15 and 5:30 pm.



## CULTURE with Deby Blum

# National Arboretum: A Living Museum

Quick! Where would you go to find:

*How Much Wood Would Boxwood Box, if Boxwood Could Box Wood?*

*The Dark Side of Conifers*

*Invasion of the Turf Snatchers*

*Delightful Ornamental Grasses: Coming to a Garden Near You*

Answer: the United States National Arboretum website/gardening page.



*Lajeroemia indicia Powhatan* is among the blooms this month at the National Arboretum.

Half a million people annually hike, bike, or drive along the nine miles of roads winding through the Arboretum, an incredible 446-acre living-research museum of trees, shrubs, and plants from every state in the union. Think of this as a school with answers for just about everything on scientific plant research. Public guided tram tours are offered weekends and holidays, April through October. The Arboretum offers free admission, free parking, pets allowed on leashes, and is just ten minutes from the U.S. Capitol grounds. The Arboretum is open every day except Christmas. Pack a picnic lunch and go!

### Special Highlights

Before you go, visit the outstanding website. Drop-down menus chockfull of informative, easy-to-understand categories (on tree-brown background colors) are offered in six languages. That's just a peek into the scholarly outreach.

The "Major Gardens and Displays" page showcases — with thumbnail photos — azalea, daylily, fern, dogwood, The Flowering Tree Walk, The Friendship Garden, The National Grove of State Trees, The National Bonsai Museum, National Capitol Columns, and National Herb Garden.

The "What's Blooming" page lists what you can expect to see during the month you visit. In August, the list includes water-lilies, hibiscus, crepe myrtles, conifers, boxwood, herbs, annuals, sweet pepperbush, pepper collection, meadow and prairie wildflowers, cardinal-flower, plum-leaf azalea, hostas, and hydrangeas.

There are pages devoted to Gardening Qs and As, the Pest Management Tips of the Month, the phenomenal Arboretum Photo Gallery, Gold Medal Winners, and a whole section on Research Activities, plus Virtual Tours and a map of the grounds!

In August, you can also learn about "Becoming a Bonsai" at a free exhibit in the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum, Special Exhibits Wing.



*R prunifolium* is another of the August blooms at the National Arboretum.

## BEFORE YOU GO

United States National Arboretum: 202-245-2726, [www.usna.usda.gov](http://www.usna.usda.gov)

More than a day trip!

**OLD OPERA HOUSE**  
Theatre Company

**The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee**  
Music & Lyrics by William Finn  
Book by Rachel Sheinkin  
Based on

**Sept. 9, 10, 11, 12  
16, 17, 18 & 19**

This musical is a hilarious tale of overachievers' angst chronicling the experience of six adolescent outsiders vying for the spelling championship of a lifetime.

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