

WINE'S HIDDEN BEAUTY contents and introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Molecular photography captures a world invisible to the naked eye... It opens the mysteries to molecules and cells. It is art based on reality, not an artist's imagined representation. Images tell a story or act as a portrait. They may even communicate scientific information visually so it is more easily understood, then it becomes a teaching tool. High Tech, High Touch: Technology and Our Search for Meaning –John Naisbitt

About this Book

A touch of Michael Pollan stepping into the *Da Vinci Code* and *Sideways*, *Wine's Hidden Beauty* explores the inner world of the grape. Scientist-photographer Sondra Barrett PhD builds a story - the hidden beauty of wine - around the discovery of intriguing microscopic images in a drop of wine. In searching for meaning among these 'mystical molecular congregations' Barrett finds clues to taste and stylistic expressions of wine. A wine code?

Wine's Hidden Beauty is a feast for the senses, a glorious celebration of the magic and mystery of wine and life. This book explores hidden beauty and the fascinating story of wine growing that brings us the spirited nectar in the glass. The tastemakers who helped build and sustain American winemaking are part of the legends of how the land, molecules, words and pictures broaden our personal experience of wine.

The book has two threads; one provides a more technical and historical background of winemaking and the language of taste. The second veers into the mystical, spiritual and the potential secret codes inside the grape and wine. Along the way, we reflect

on how we are like the grape and wine. This book is only a beginning.

Chapter 1, Discovering the Inner Grape, takes you back to how this exploration into the beauty, heart and soul of wine began.

In the next chapter **Transformation**, we start with the vineyard and the alchemy of fermentation where the inner view of wine is uncovered. As we drink in from youthful juice to an old mature cab, we witness that juice's simple forms grow larger and more complex. A wine grows up, inside and out, and when it begins to lose its vitality, its appearance changes again. The microscopic landscape within wine reveals life and death.

Shaping Taste explores what informs and shapes our tastes, besides molecules and biology. How does the chemistry of taste and terroir, the winemakers, and critics play a part in our experience of wine and food? We discover clues to how to taste wine from award-winning winemaker Heidi Peterson Barrett. The chapter ends asking what shapes our language, the words we use to describe flavors, taste and smell.

Wine Legends: Art in the Bottle takes us to the people and wineries that launched the growth of American winemaking - Beaulieu Vineyards, Georges de Latour and André Tchelistcheff, Sterling Vineyards, Mike Grgich, and Robert Mondavi to cover just a few of the people who inspired winemaking to be what it is today.

In **Cultivating Well-being** we look beyond the French Paradox at the links between wine and health. Building on the framework of groundbreaking medical research, the author speculates that one key to wine's role in health is in creating community and

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ritual. How the vineyard is cultivated - organically or biodynamically, expands on the bigger picture of health for the vineyard, the people working there as well as our planet. Here we meet winemakers Jim Fetzer, Mike Grgich and Mike Benziger who are committed to growing wine in the most sustainable, and perhaps, spiritual ways.

The Spirit of the Grape asks, why the grape? Why has it survived centuries as the only fruit to enjoy a cult-like status? Does the grape have a spiritual purpose, akin to Michael Pollan's supposition in *The Botany of Desire*, that plants serve to fulfill human desires; that we have a purpose to fulfill a plant's destiny. Perhaps that underlies wine's role in sacred rituals, the ancient gods and goddesses of wine, and becoming intoxicated with Spirit.

In *The Soul of Wine*, a larger and more personal question is addressed – what is soul, does wine have one, and does a “Calling” to work with the grape answer our soul's purpose. Reflecting on symbolic language of the soul, winemaker Heidi Barrett looks at whether there can be a feminine soul or expression of wine. So imbued with the spirit and soul of the grape, we now toast this inspiring elixir while discovering how the ritual of toasting began. Clink! Clink!

The final chapter *Savoring Life*, rounds out our glass by viewing how this exploration of wine can remind us of our connections to land, spirit and the great mystery of life. What lies dormant comes alive again when the author is introduced to the spirituality of wine and re-inspired by the beauty of Rudd Oakville Estate Wines.

The book ends with how it began, asking can we use a pretty picture to help us enjoy and explore a wine's expression? Do the images provide hints to another dimension inside wine? You are given a playful game to discover for yourself, the “wine code Rorschach game,” to enjoy with your next glass of wine. The game encourages you to sip in wine's delights while exploring your inner knowing. This permits even the person who doesn't allow wine to touch their lips, to enjoy the spirit of the grape. It takes the major theme of the book – what shapes our experience of wine and life – to savoring the moment, with wine, with an idea, with another, with NOW.

Before I met and developed a relationship with wine I was a medical scientist searching for causes and cures for leukemia. The grape seduced me away from cancer cells, dying children, and hospitals to discover merlot, pinot, and hospitality.

About the Author Sondra Barrett PhD

As a research scientist my expertise was in deciphering microscopic clues to the health and aging of human cells. I soon would take that experience to the fermenting vat. You can imagine my surprise to discover beauty when I looked at a drop of wine through the microscope. Even more surprising, over time, was to sense a kind of language engendered by the patterns and shapes in a given wine. This ‘pictorial wine alphabet’ offered cues that helped me learn about, enjoy, and taste wine. I had fun matching the wine art to words used to describe taste and personality - sharp, soft, feminine, or bold. It was even more fun offering tastings with folks who wanted to play the game of tasting shapes.

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What started more than twenty years ago, as preparation for my first art show became a compelling commitment to learn and share more of this fascinating story of life in the bottle.

My first discovery was at Sterling Vineyards when I was artist-in-residence documenting winemaking from the inside out. The winemakers gave me barrel samples and wines from all over Napa Valley. This extraordinary experience led me to uncovering distinct patterns and beauty in a glass of wine. Early on, a Napa grape grower, Rachel Balyeat, provided some financial support for me to delve further into the life of wine. She hosted a special dinner with acclaimed wine maestro André Tchelistcheff to discuss what these pictures could mean. André's first reaction - "They are the jewels in wine. Put them on silk scarves."

What I've learned since those first years delving into drops of wine has inspired a deep appreciation of the inner world of life, with wine as the protagonist. To some people, the designs within wine are interpreted simply as abstract beauty uncovered with a tool of science, the microscope. For others, these images offer insights into style and expressions of taste, texture and flavor. For all of us they can serve as a reminder of the exquisite world, which we inhabit and which inhabits us.

When I began writing this book more than a decade ago it was to use wine's inner beauty as a platform to talk about winegrowing, wine tasting, and sensory pleasures. By the end, after visiting vineyards, meeting numerous winemakers, wine lovers, and the "mystic grape," it was to reveal the grape's "sacred" purpose to sustain life and nurture community.

The pictures you will see are taken through a 35 mm camera atop an interference light microscope. Interference microscopy breaks white light into its rainbow of colors. In other words, I "paint" what I see with this light. Many of the pure chemicals and patterns in wine would be transparent were it not for the interference prisms on the microscope.

In *Wine's Hidden Beauty* you will travel through vineyards, invisible vistas and molecules, feasting with your senses, a celebratory look at life. Come inside and let wine be your guide. 🍷

The book is beautifully illustrated with more than 100 color photographs.

