GET THEE TO THE WEB

FOR REFERENCE OR RESEARCH, QUICK ANSWERS OR IN-DEPTH ARTICLES, THE INTERNET IS THE PLACE TO BE

BY W. BLAKE GRAY

The best wine information is online; we all know that. But which sites should you be bookmarking? Most guides to wine websites are for consumers, not the industry. Here are some sites we believe are especially useful for our readers: retailers and restaurant wine buyers.

**Essentials**

You probably already know about Wine Searcher. Its retail listings show what your competitors are charging for the same bottles. A lot of people don’t realize the site also lists whiskies; there’s no better place to find obscure bourbons. Wine Searcher also covers wine news (In fact, know, I cover the West Coast for them.)

wine-searcher.com

It’s worth keeping an eye on Cellar Tracker, where ordinary people rate wines. Wines with poor ratings might get harder to sell.

cellartracker.com

Wine Business has the best site for news about California wine and legal issues affecting the wine industry, and a good set of links to all types of wine news and interesting blog posts.

winebusiness.com

While we’re at it, if you’re interested in jobs in the wine industry, Wine Business’s listings are the best.

winebusiness.com/classifieds/winejobs

And you might want to see what kind of salary to expect from the magazine’s annual salary survey report.

winebusiness.com/wbm/?go=getArticle&dataId=158092

Able Grape is a wine-focused search engine that promises to get you more specific results than using Google. Also when displaying search results, it helpfully describes the type of links shown as “producer,” “blog,” “broker,” etc.

ablegrape.com

Tom Wark, blogging in Napa/Sonoma since 2004, positions Fermentation as “set inside the world of wine public relations—where the media, culture and I mingle.” But topics range far from PR, albeit primarily West Coast in orientation.

fermentationwineblog.com/

Though focused on the UK market, Decanter is often the first website to break news about French wineries in English.

decanter.com

Wine News Italy is the best news site about Italian wines, but it's in Italian so get your Google Translate running.

winenews.it

**Pronunciation Guides**

There’s no longer any need to try to puzzle out diacritical marks on italicized backwards vowels in a dictionary. Today’s wine pronunciation guides speak these words out loud. Our favorite is the Wine Society’s, which covers many lesser-known world regions: thewinesociety.com/grape-pronounce

**European Angle**

Agence France Presse is a hard news site, but it often runs features about French wine, particularly business features. I’ve never had any luck searching it for “wine” but if you look at it often enough you will see some news that isn’t published elsewhere in English.

afp.com/en/home
Web-aided selling tips

- The printed word is not what it once was. And in wine shops, even tasting notes with ratings feel tired. Today's consumers like pictures of people and places. Consider printing out a picture of the winemaker or the estate and stapling it to the front of a case stack. The novelty of the image can grab their eye.

- Looking for some fun newsletter or shelf talker material? Foodimentary lists national food holidays you likely didn't know existed. Not sure if it will help move Crème de Menthe on National Crème de Menthe Day (Sept. 15th), but could it hurt? National Drink-a-Beer Day (Sept. 28th), on the other hand, seems like an easy sell. foodimentary.com/

- If you have the best price in the country, or a particular wine, try printing out the Wine Searcher page showing that. You can post it in front of the wine with the header “Best Price in the USA!”

- American wineries are much more likely to have a good web presence than European wineries, and that can help you sell the wine. If a winery has a particularly good website (Jordan Winery is a great example), consider putting a small shelf talker suggesting that customers look at the site. Your customers will do the rest with their phones, possibly right there in your store.

- Eater's specialty is restaurants, but the smart and funny website does have a drinks area that recently covered the differences in wine label preferences between Baby Boomers and Millennials, among other topics. It's worth keeping an eye on as Millennials become ever more important as customers.

Eater.com

Spirits and Beer

Spirits haven’t gotten the love from the Internet that wine has, but there are a few good sites to check out.

For bartenders, Alcademics is essential, with serious research into things like how to make different types of ice, simple syrup spoilage rates, you name it. alcademics.com

Punch is a well-funded consumer website that covers all aspects of drinking culture, and it’s strongest on cocktails. punchdrunk.com

Punch is meant to be read online, which gives it an advantage over the similar magazine Imbibe, which has online content to supplement its print publication. imbibemagazine.com

For whisky news, check out whiskyadvocate.com. The blog section is updated more frequently than the “news” section.

For beer, beeradvocate.com is pretty good for news and features. Ratebeer.com is what it sounds like: a beer rating site. That said, beer ratings don't seem to have the interest of or impact on re-sellers in the same way wine ratings do (let's keep it that way).

More Sites and Blogs

Napa Valley Vintners has a fine site about its wines in general and one of the best aspects is its map of Napa wineries, which will come in handy if you’re planning a visit, as the valley is bigger than you might think.

napavintners.com/maps

University of Adelaide teaches a very popular wine course online, worth checking out if you want to expand your general knowledge.

edx.org/course/world-wine-grape-glass-adelaidex-wine101x-2?

Wine Folly is now the best-read wine blog in the world. It’s a light-hearted site based on graphics, not text, and it’s worth keeping an eye on because it’s what your Millennial consumers might be reading.

winefolly.com