

WHEN IT COMES TO WINE AND READING, NOBODY DOES IT BETTER THAN PATRICK ALEXANDER



This month another 16 lucky students will attend Patrick Alexander's Wine Appreciation Program, a six-week class that teaches you about the basics of wine drinking. What distinguishes a merlot from a Bordeaux? What makes one cabernet sauvignon better than the next? Can Californian wines compete with the French? If anyone knows the answers, it's Alexander, who originally developed the class at UM while teaching there.

What makes Alexander so knowledgeable? He never intended to become an oenophile. After graduating with a degree in philosophy in his native England, Alexander decided to live the practical life of an international accountant. By chance he ended up working first in the Bordeaux region of France, then on the Swiss-Italian border near the vineyards of Piedmont, and finally for five years in California wine country.

"So everywhere I've lived after leaving England I've been surrounded by vineyards. That's where my background

comes from. And then I moved to Coral Gables, where I have been for 32 years and where there is no wine," he says.

Rather than disappointing him, however, Alexander says this "is one of the best places to live in the world if you like wine." That's because Miami is where South American wines enter the U.S. market, and where the affluent citizenry enjoys European imports as well as Californians. "If you live in Bordeaux, all you drink is Bordeaux. If you try to convince a friend to drink Burgundy, then they think, 'Oh well, you're English and don't know anything.' Here, you have all the wines."

Adding a twist to his classes is Alexander's book (published last year by Books & Books Press, of course) entitled "The Booklover's Guide to Wine." It is really more of an introduction to understanding and appreciating wines, but you can also learn why a claret makes sense when reading Charles Dickens, and how Albariño white wine pairs well with "The Hobbit".

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