



Why Miami is the perfect spot to be a wine lover (and other secrets of an expert)

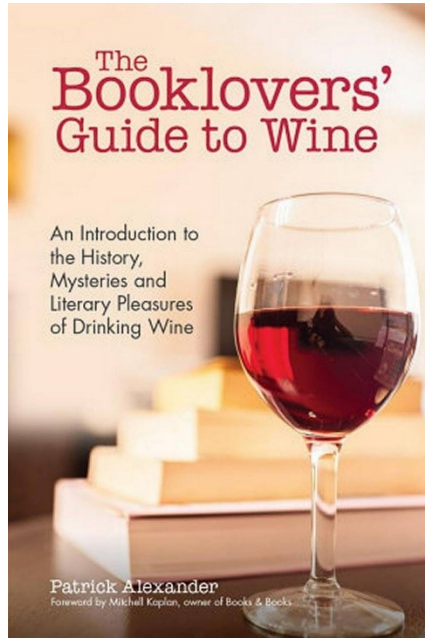
BY CONNIE OGLE
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Listen up, lovers of cheap wine (aka everybody who reads this column): Wine expert Patrick Alexander says we're drinking the right thing.

He also says that Miami is the perfect place to be a wine lover. Maybe [not the best place to be a commuter](#). But definitely a good spot to learn about wine.

Alexander, who teaches a popular wine appreciation course at Books & Books and is the author of "The Booklovers' Guide to Wine," has lived in some of the world's best wine regions in Italy, France and California. (Yeah, I know — I hate him a little for it, too.)

He lives in Coral Gables now and [will be appearing at Books & Books](#) Oct. 17 to talk about many subjects: the book; his class; appreciating wine; drinking wine; bathing in wine, and filling up a swimming pool with wine and diving in.



I might have made those last two up. Nevertheless, Alexander knows a lot about wine, and he enjoys pairing wines with some of his favorite writers (Shakespeare with sherry, J.R.R. Tolkien with Albariño, Jane Austen with Chardonnay).

I'm pretty happy with that last pairing, as I am an unrepentant Chardonnay drinker. But like many wine lovers, I get stuck in a rut and need encouragement to try new things.

This is where Alexander comes in.

"I can't teach you everything," Alexander says, "but I can get you out of your rut."

Here's what he has to say on several important subjects.

"The Booklovers' Guide to Wine." Patrick Alexander. Books & Books Press. \$19.95.

Why a wine appreciation course can be beneficial

Because most Americans didn't grow up drinking wine with their parents. Alexander, who was born in London and grew up in a household where the children drank a little watered-down wine with meals, tasted his first wine at age 5. Told you he was an expert. On the table every night, he says, "there was salt, pepper and wine."

In the U.S., things are a bit different. "The first time you drink wine, you're in college, and you chug it, and get drunk," he says. "You don't grow up with it."

Why Miami is a great place to live if you love wine

"It's the best place in the world for a wine lover to live," Alexander says. "You have access to American wine. There's a big European influence, so you have that as well. Most important is access to new wines from Chile and Argentina, which want to crack the American market."

What wines should we be drinking that we're not drinking?

Alexander suggests Vinho Verde from Portugal, which means "green wine," as in "young wine," as in you can drink it right now and definitely should. That is my favorite kind of wine. His other recommendation is Torrontes, a white grape from

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Argentina that is, he writes, “deliciously aromatic and refreshing,” with a “marked acidity, a satisfying mouth-feel, and a distinctive lingering aftertaste of peaches.”



Patrick Alexander at Happy Wine Miami on Eighth Street.

His favorite local watering hole

Happy Wine Miami on Eighth Street for its casual, friendly atmosphere and well-priced wines.



Drinking \$10 bottles of wine is absolutely OK

“We should all be drinking \$10 bottles of wine,” Alexander says. We should branch out and try more expensive versions of our favorite varietals from time to time to see if they’re worth it, of course. But should we be [ashamed](#) of our desire for Yellowtail? “No,” he says emphatically.

The surprising wine you’ll find at his house

Two Buck Chuck Chardonnay from Trader Joe’s. No, seriously. If you went to his house right now, there would be a bottle in the fridge, unless he and his wife have already polished it off.

What’s going to happen to the industry in the wake of the Napa and Sonoma fires?

“Wine prices are going to skyrocket,” Alexander says. “We’re going to have to move into an era of Three Buck Chuck.”

IF YOU GO

Who: Patrick Alexander will talk about ‘The Booklovers’ Guide to Wine’

When: 7 p.m. Oct. 17

Where: Books & Books, 265 Aragon Ave., Coral Gables

Info: www.booksandbooks.com

Wine course: The next round starts Nov. 6; cost is \$299 for 12 hours of lectures, 24 different wines, all class materials and a four course wine-pairing dinner specially prepared by Chef Allen Susser.