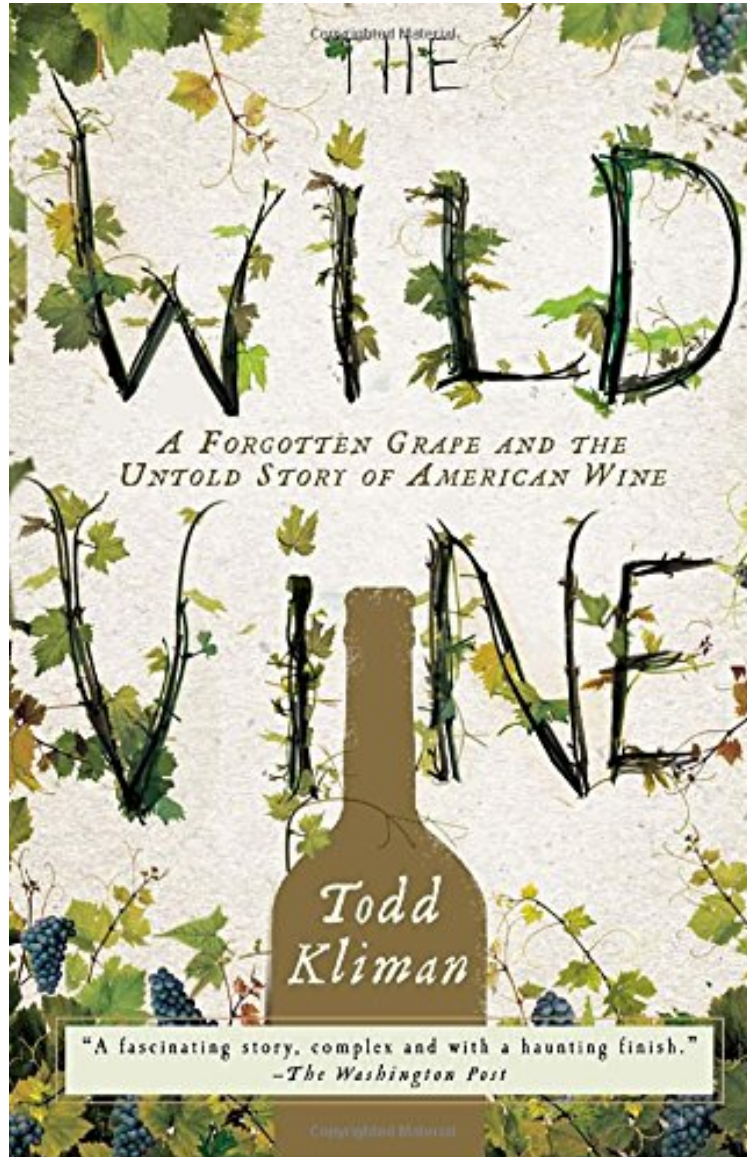


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# The Wild Vine: A Forgotten Grape and the Untold Story of American Wine

Todd Kliman

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#109110 in Books Todd Kliman 2011-05-03 2011-05-03 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .70 x 5.40l, .54 #File Name: 0307409376288 pages The Wild Vine A Forgotten Grape and the Untold Story of American Wine | File size: 79.Mb

**Todd Kliman : The Wild Vine: A Forgotten Grape and the Untold Story of American Wine** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Wild Vine: A Forgotten Grape and the Untold Story of American Wine:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Should be called: Norton/Cynthiana-The Real StoryBy Scott E EckartI'm sure this is one of those things that depends on the individual and his or her current situation...but I personally thought this book was fantastic. Having just visited Hermann...and knowing a little about Norton...the book was an outstanding summary of its history. I happen to like Native wines...such as Concord and Catawba...and to have the whole history put into context...it really is interesting, historically speaking. The author knew he was on to something regarding the wine industry and their insular approach to wine marketing, particularly regarding the spell they seem to have put on the popular consumer psyche. I'm not sure I'd compare Norton to a first growth Bordeaux...but I will say that the Stone Hill wines are pretty freaking good. Unfortunately, I've had some terrible Norton's as well. Perhaps that speaks to the grapes evolution...afterall, Bordeaux is hundreds of years ahead of us (literally); In another universe, with all the U.S. growers and winemakers struggling to master the wild vine...perhaps something incredible could await us. Nonetheless...the perspective is appropriate as far as I'm concerned. And the story is a great one indeed.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A story with a wonderful arcBy Kenneth UmbachI read *The Wild Vine* as a wine fan (connoisseur is too grand a term here) who reads voraciously about wines and their history (especially American wines) and drinks a wide range of wines. Having already read much about the Norton grape, I'd tried a bottle from the St. James Winery, in St. James, Missouri, and was primed to learn more. Kliman's book was spot on, at least for my tastes, both for what it says about the grape and for what it says about people and places related to it. Even readers who are not especially into wine might enjoy the stories of people and of local and regional history, and the backbone narrative that forms the present-day arc of the story, intertwined with wide-ranging history and locations. The book has an arc of almost novelistic proportions, with some real surprises along the way. (No spoilers here. You'll have to read it.) As a bonus, Kliman provides the best discussion I have seen of the relationship between Norton and Cynthiana. (My bottle of St. James Cynthiana awaits.) That's wine-geek stuff, I grant you. I'll be ordering a few bottles from some of the wineries featured in the book -- Horton and Chrysalis for sure -- to make my own judgments and comparisons. If at all possible, my wife and I will be visiting both of those as well, armed with considerable context thanks to *The Wild Vine*. FYI, for folks who read the book on Kindle, as I did: at the end, keep paging PAST the "rate this book" page to find the bibliography and acknowledgments. They are included. As for that St. James Norton, FWIW, it was certainly distinctive in comparison to the wines I am used to from California, France, Italy, Spain, and South Africa (and a few other places -- even Michigan). While it was speaking the same language as those others, it was in a distinctively different dialect. I can understand why it would not be to everyone's taste. (But then, neither are over-oaked California Chardonnays and highly alcoholic, intense California Zinfandels and Cabernets.)

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Chatwin Chases a Grape? Well, sort of.By Rich MillerI live in Alabama, and recently tried a Norton wine from a local vineyard and winery. It was complicated and hard to pin down, so of course I began researching: a real, non-Concord, non-Muscadine that could grow in our climate, and produce a profound and interesting red wine? Tell me more! There's much to read online about the Norton grape and its history, but none told so well as Todd Kliman does in *The Wild Vine*. Kliman's story, both of researching the grape itself, its creator, and its most vocal modern advocate, is at times moving, sad, funny and dramatic. There is tragedy in Norton's story, as in any human endeavor, but there is also a sense of how heavy the weight of history must be when it all but erases an achievement like the Norton grape from not only modern awareness, but almost from history itself. *The Wild Vine* spends much time on the personalities that affected the grape's journey, including that of Kliman himself, but in the process the grape's story shows through as the unifying thread. The book is a good example of a Chatwinesque travelogue, though the travel is (mostly) through a plant's history rather than a region's geography. My one criticism of the book is that it can become a bit \*too\* self-involved at points, exposing Kliman as a bit more of a Romantic than is seemly, but these bits are short, and don't detract meaningfully in my opinion. All in all I found *The Wild Vine* to be an engrossing read, and recommend it to anyone who enjoys wine and/or the more quirky side of history.

A rich romp through untold American history featuring fabulous characters, *The Wild Vine* is the tale of a little-known American grape that rocked the fine-wine world of the nineteenth century and is poised to do so again today. Author Todd Kliman sets out on an epic quest to unravel the mystery behind Norton, a grape used to make a Missouri wine that claimed a prestigious gold medal at an international exhibition in Vienna in 1873. At a time when the vineyards of France were being ravaged by phylloxera, this grape seemed to promise a bright future for a truly American brand of wine-making, earthy and wild. And then Norton all but vanished. What happened? The narrative begins more than a hundred years before California wines were thought to have put America on the map as a wine-making nation and weaves together the lives of a fascinating cast of renegades. We encounter the suicidal Dr. Daniel Norton, tinkering in his experimental garden in 1820s Richmond, Virginia. Half on purpose and half by chance, he creates a hybrid grape that can withstand the harsh New World climate and produce good, drinkable wine, thus succeeding where so many others had failed so fantastically before, from the Jamestown colonists to Thomas Jefferson himself. Thanks to an influential Long Island, New York, seed catalog, the grape moves west, where it is picked up in Missouri by German immigrants who craft the historic 1873 bottling. Prohibition sees these vineyards burned to the ground by government

order, but bootleggers keep the grape alive in hidden backwoods plots. Generations later, retired Air Force pilot Dennis Horton, who grew up playing in the abandoned wine caves of the very winery that produced the 1873 Norton, brings cuttings of the grape back home to Virginia. Here, dot-com-millionaire-turned-vintner Jenni McCloud, on an improbable journey of her own, becomes Norton's ultimate champion, deciding, against all odds, to stake her entire reputation on the outsider grape. Brilliant and provocative, *The Wild Vine* shares with readers a great American secret, resuscitating the Norton grape and its elusive, inky drink and forever changing the way we look at wine, America, and long-cherished notions of identity and reinvention.

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Half on purpose and half by chance, he creates a hybrid grape that can withstand the harsh New World climate and produce good, drinkable wine, thus succeeding where so many others had failed so fantastically before, from the Jamestown colonists to Thomas Jefferson himself. Thanks to an influential Long Island, New York, seed catalog, the grape moves west, where it is picked up in Missouri by German immigrants who craft the historic 1873 bottling. Prohibition sees these vineyards burned to the ground by government order, but bootleggers keep the grape alive in hidden backwoods plots. Generations later, retired Air Force pilot Dennis Horton, who grew up playing in the abandoned wine caves of the very winery that produced the 1873 Norton, brings cuttings of the grape back home to Virginia. Here, dot-com-millionaire-turned-vintner Jenni McCloud, on an improbable journey of her own, becomes Norton's ultimate champion, deciding, against all odds, to stake her entire reputation on the outsider grape. Brilliant and provocative, *The Wild Vine* shares with readers a great American secret, resuscitating the Norton grape and its elusive, inky drink and forever changing the way we look at wine, America, and long-cherished notions of identity and reinvention. From the Hardcover edition. Guest by Darin Strauss A recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Book Critics Circle Award, and numerous other prizes, the internationally bestselling writer Darin Strauss is the author of the acclaimed novels *Chang Eng*, *The Real McCoy*, and *More Than It Hurts You* and the NBCC-winning memoir *Half a Life*. These have been *New York Times* Notable Books, *Newsweek*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Tribune*, and NPR Best Books of the Year, and Darin has been translated into fourteen languages and published in nineteen countries. He is a Clinical Associate Professor at NYU's creative writing program. *The Wild Vine* is a wonder—fun, smart, fascinating, eye-opening. It's the wine book as a thrilling mystery. It's the true story of a man obsessed by a grape: the Norton, invented by a driven American who named the variety he created after himself. Stubborn, ambitious, a product of his time and place, and also a uniquely American inventor, Daniel Norton. But Norton is just one of the unforgettable characters Todd Kliman brings us. The other is Michael Marsh, a multi-millionaire software guru who glimpses a new life for himself when he takes his first sip of the Norton. That epiphany sends him on a rollicking journey of personal discovery, one that sees him change his sex and establish a winery meant to restore the doctor's legacy. Beyond these poignant, enthralling stories, *The Wild Vine* gives you the history of wine-making in America. What's amazing is that the career of American wineries follows that of America herself; only when growers found the courage to use national varieties—that is, only when Americans discovered their own character of grape—did American wine come into its own. It's also the story of German American immigration; of the American viticultural scene (which used to be Missouri!); of Prohibition; even of sexual politics in America. In captivating prose Kliman relates one of those magical little American stories that illuminate the whole country. And so *The Wild Vine* is not only a wonderful, strange read; it's a first-rate American history lesson. From Publishers Weekly In this engaging history, food and wine writer Kliman focuses on the Norton, an American grape hybrid, its namesake early 19th-century creator, and its current-day advocate. Going back to the early efforts of American grape growing and winemaking, Kliman assembles a solid biography of the bereaved doctor and amateur horticulturalist whose Jeffersonian devotion to a native American grape and wine eventually led to the birth of a new variety. Despite viticultural progress and recognition, however muted, and his efforts to draw the former president's interest, Norton died without achieving viticultural success and was lost to history. Kliman's narrative discloses the hidden story of the Norton's nurturing over the decades in the Midwest and the role of German-Americans and other immigrants in its survival. Through means and methods like homemade winemaking, the hardy fruit endured blight and Prohibition, and was eventually restored to its native Virginia soil, where the book's other dominant and most colorful personality, a transsexual, was liberated by her physical change to professionally pursue the grape's cultivation. (June) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a

division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Kliman's thorough research and entertaining spin on the Norton's history make for a vintage that goes down smooth." -- T. Rees-Shapiro, Washington Post Book World "Who knew a grape could generate so much history, so much commerce, so much entrancing narrative, so much splendid writing. Todd Kliman's *The Wild Vine* is as brilliantly successful a hybrid as its subject: combining the best characteristics of history and memoir, biography and travelogue, it is an utter delight." -- Robert Olen Butler, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* "Todd Kliman's *The Wild Vine* is beautiful and eye-opening and you'll enjoy it as you would a bracing and wonderful wine. It's a mystery story, a history lesson, a personal journey between hard covers: a great, American vintage." -- Darin Strauss, author of *Chang Eng* and *More Than It Hurts You* "This book will move you in ways that might surprise you, for *The Wild Vine* is about much more than an obscure American grape; it's about heartbreak, determination, courage, and humanity. If in vino veritas, this may be the truest story ever told, and Todd Kliman tells it with grace and sensitivity." -- Don and Petie Kladstrup, authors of *Wine and War* "A fascinating, well-written and researched cross-generational journey that follows the DNA of a single grape variety that I had never heard of before. I don't know if the Norton grape will make it as one of the great wines of the world, but its history, and the eccentric characters who carried its hope for a wine that could be grown and vinified in Virginia, of all places, makes for page-turning reading." -- Rex Pickett, author of *Sideways* "Kliman tells the ups and downs of Norton with equal panache, pointing a bright light on grape hybrids, an important yet little-known part of the wine world, and introducing a cast of interesting characters along the way. While reading this book, I kept wishing that I had a bottle of Norton at my elbow." -- George M. Taber, author of *Judgment of Paris* "A well-researched and fascinating story that reads like a novel. A true and highly entertaining American tale." -- Anthony Dias Blue, *The Tasting Panel* magazine, WCBS, KABC "This is a terrific book. If it were a wine, it would be expressive but earthy, subtly spiced, with great structure and a long, lingering finish." -- Toby Young, of *Top Chef* "Hold on for an entertaining and enlightening 400-year, transcontinental, trans-cultural investigation of the greatest wine you've never heard of. Todd Kliman squeezes a hell of a yarn from a grape." -- Daniel Evan Weiss, author of *The Roaches Have No King* and *The Swine's Wedding* From the Hardcover edition.