

Barry C. Smith [dir.], *Question of Taste. The Philosophy of Wine*, Signal Books, Oxford, 2007, 222 p.

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Territoires du vin

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Pour une redéfinition des terroirs

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- 1 Interest in and consumption of wine have grown exponentially in recent years and there has been a corresponding increase in consumers' knowledge of wine, which in turn has generated discussions about the meaning and value of wine in our lives and how renowned wine critics influence our subjective assessment of quality and shape public tastes.
- 2 Wine first played a part in Western philosophy at the symposium of the early Greek philosophers where it enlivened and encouraged discussion. During the Enlightenment David Hume recommended drinking wine with friends as a cure for philosophical melancholy, while Immanuel Kant thought wine softened the harsher sides of men's characters and made their company more convivial.
- 3 In *Questions of Taste*, the first book in any language on the subject, philosophers such as Roger Scruton and wine professionals like Andrew Jefford, author of the award-winning book *The New France*, turn their attention to wine as an object of perception, assessment and appreciation. They and their fellow contributors examine the relationship between a wine's qualities and our knowledge of them; the links between the scientifically describable properties of wine and the conscious experience of the wine taster; what we base our judgments of quality on and whether they are subjective or objective; the distinction between the cognitive and sensory aspects of taste; whether wine appreciation is an aesthetic experience; the role language plays in describing and evaluating wines; the significance of their in-

toxicating effect on us; the meaning and value of drinking wine with others; whether disagreement leads to relativism about judgements of taste; and whether we can really share the pleasures of drinking.

- 4 Questions of Taste will be of interest to all those fascinated by the production and consumption of wine and how it affects our minds in ways we might not hitherto have suspected.