

## LOS ANGELES BASTIDE

When *Bastide*, the high-concept French dining establishment in west LA, closed last year for retooling, most assumed that its owner, TV-commercial director Joe Pytko, had given up on the enterprise.

Then he met Walter Manzke, a *Patina* alumnus most recently of *L'Auberge Carmel*. In discussing what they hate about eating out, a concept emerged: fine dining, unstarched. Now *Bastide* is open again, with a décor that signals the change—elegant, but with a Warhol veneer, like the marble tables in the garden room, lit by lamps constructed from Campbell Soup cans.

The same whimsy informs Manzke's menus. On the page his dishes read more like talking points than menu items (listed as "Amuses 1,2,3," "Abalone" or "Lamb"). On the plate, they expand in theatrical ways: "Beef" five ways, includes a cube of Kobe, bone marrow bites and braised oxtail, pursed in spinach leaves.

Sommelier Pieter Verheyde comes to LA by way of Alain Ducasse in New York and Monaco. By filling Pytko's glass with a steady stream of exotic Slovenian wines, Verheyde convinced him that the restaurant would be well served by extending its list beyond France. The wine list is now geographically themed: Australian selections fall under the heading "Indian Oceanic." France is "Atlantic Oceanic." Piemonte, "Po, Sub-Alpine." The global focus diverts the reader away from conventional associations, which Verheyde isn't afraid to exploit in his menu pairings. With the "Squab," he'll pour a smoky fumin from Val d'Aosta; and with your second "Sweet," a precious ounce of 1966 Dow's Port. Suddenly what was once just a wine list feels like a world of opportunity.

—PATRICK J. COMISKEY

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## Lady Natural

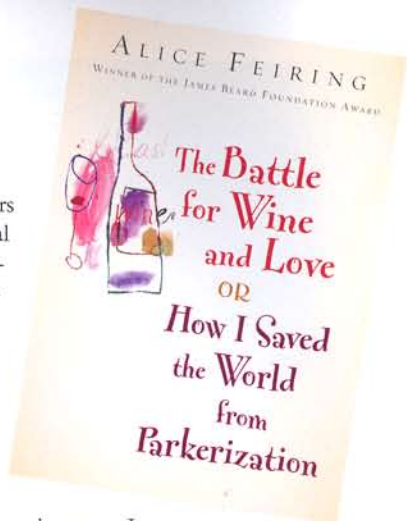
The wine memoir has become a literary genre. Some authors use it as a way to sustain their liquid diet, though personal tales of debauchery can grow tiresome. Others use it as a merchandizing opportunity, such as Kermit Lynch, whose *Adventures on the Wine Route* promoted in prose the kinds and styles of wines he promotes in his Berkeley wine store. Lynch's writing is so good, in fact, that his book transcends the genre and remains today, two decades after its initial publication, one of the classics of vinous literature.

Alice Feiring sets mock-epic goals for her own memoir, stated directly in the title, *The Battle for Wine and Love, or How I Saved the World from Parkerization*. Feiring, who recently won a James Beard Award for her story in the *New York Times* Business section on the ways in which contemporary winemakers manipulate their wine, does not shy away from controversy or confrontation. Barely five feet tall and 100 pounds, much of it contributed by a train of frizzy red hair, Feiring is a memoirist on a quest. Her Sancho Panza, another *New York Times* writer whom she refers to as Skinny, needles her along on the ride, mostly through the vineyards of the Loire and Burgundy, mostly in search of a good man and a wine that doesn't taste manufactured. All the while, she's battling the influence of her "own personal Kurtz," Robert Parker.

Feiring wisely separates Parker the man from Parkerization, the phenomenon of winemakers hoping to intuit what a critic wants from them—and the sweet, gluey plonk they make in obeisance. The most comedic scenes of the book result from this tiny woman demurely battling Parker, a man legendary for his size and appetites. When at a black-tie wine affair in New York, Feiring approaches him to ask for an interview, she manages to sketch the scene with a light touch. Yet it resonates long after finishing the book. Whether telling tales of winemakers or more personal anecdotes, the book explores tensions in the current wine and dating scenes—not only regarding "natural" vs. "hyper-manipulative" winemaking, but also simpler issues like boyfriend trouble and how to pay for the next cup of espresso, or the next flight to France.

On the surface, the book might sound girly, a chick-lit approach to wine. Certainly the cover is not designed to attract a male readership. But, like Lynch, Feiring's storytelling muscle takes the book beyond the neat genres established in the trade. This is a great read, a great perspective on the movement for natural winemaking—and it's funny. —JOSHUA GREENE

*The Battle for Wine and Love, or How I Saved the World from Parkerization*  
by Alice Feiring (Harcourt, \$23)



## Flying with Wine...

Recent aviation rules banning liquids in carry-on luggage have made travel with wine a challenge. Here's how to get around it: Pack your bottles in the compact and soft-sided new **Bottlewise bags**, which fit easily into your checked luggage and are designed to prevent breakage. The totes hold two bottles each and come in three different colors: bordeaux, black and cork. \$48.95 at [bottlewise.com](http://bottlewise.com). —N.D.



## ...or carrying it to dinner...

If you're looking for a practical, no-frills wine tote, consider the new **Corx wine bags**. These durable polyester black bags come with an adjustable shoulder strap, Velcro dividers and reusable gel ice packs for chilling. A three-bottle bag goes for \$39.99 at [corxwinebags.com](http://corxwinebags.com). For a heavier wine load, there's also a six-bottle version for \$79.99. —N.D.

