

## 15 MINUTES WITH GARY VAYNERCHUCK

Wine Library TV's host and blogger is changing the face of wine criticism

By Jessica Yadegaran  
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Gary Vaynerchuk believes this generation is going to demystify wine. All they need to do is bring the thunder.

He brings it five days a week with his groundbreaking video blog, Wine Library TV, which is named after his parents' New Jersey shop. His tastings air from the thunder saddle, better known as the basement.

There, to an estimated 80,000 daily viewers, Vaynerchuk, 32, takes "sniffy sniffs," spits into a Jets bucket and compares a Zinfandel's muted nose to a basketball player who can't go left.

Vaynerchuk, who is director of operations at Wine Library, is about educating consumers and debunking myths. He'll scrunch up his face in disgust and slam a wine while his father tries to sell it upstairs. Then he'll tell you not to listen to a word he says. Think Jim Carrey, with a palate.

And while most people who take Robert Parker's word as gold could never spot the critic in a restaurant, we've seen Vaynerchuk on "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." His honesty is arresting. He's the real deal.

Recently, I caught up with Vaynerchuk while he was in San Francisco promoting his book, "Gary Vaynerchuk's 101 Wines Guaranteed to Inspire, Delight, and Bring Thunder to Your World" (Rodale, \$19.95). Here's what the man of thunder had to say.

Q: What do you think the world should drink more of?

A: Crisp white wines. Albarino. Greco Di Tufo. Falanghina. Complex wines at 8 to 15 bucks and amazing with food. There's something to be said for acidic whites. I think they train your palate and open you up.

Q: What wine secret do you hope never gets out?

A: Grower's Champagne. Everyone continuously drinks Moet and Perrier. But there are hundreds of Champagnes that rock the house. I love to keep my Cava a secret, too. For \$12 to \$18, you can drink insane Cavas.

Q: What's your preferred method of preservation? Gas? Vacuum? Freezer?

A: I'm a huge fan of putting the cork back in the bottle and putting it on the counter. Or cook with it the third day. But the real thing is boxed wine. If our society throws out

preconceived notions of this form of wine, I'd say give me Camus Cabernet in a Tetra Pak.

Q: You've been called the millennial Robert Parker at a time when Alice Feiring's book on homogenous, Parkerized wines just hit stores. Got an opinion on the guy?

A: He's a product of his own success. He's passionate and honest. That really rocks me. There's a lot of people at fault for what's happening to wine. The retailers who quote him and use shelf talkers instead of branding themselves. There are not enough messengers of wine. And in general, we are a society that doesn't think for itself. Plus, we are a very young wine society.

Q: You started drinking wine relatively late for someone who grew up around it. What was your Aha! wine?

A: It was a 1993 Masi Amarone and it tasted like pure milk chocolate. I was 22. But I could recite Italian DOCGs when I was a lot younger. That's the thing. A lot of people can wine-nerd it up, but they've never compared Grenache roses from the Loire and Languedoc. People are totally misguided. Vaynermaniacs are about discovering what they like.