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# Bible on Indian wines

I am all of a little less than three decades old, and practically as old as the burgeoning Indian wine industry. In a conversation with Peter Csizmadia-Honigh, who has authored *Wines of India, a Concise Guide*, I learn, "India is a wonderful country inter-weaving an array of cultures and traditions. This in turn gives rise to diverse cuisines that can go well with an array of wines. But the West has often overlooked the wine production potential in India."

I would say not only the West but even in India we have known little of the industry over the years. When we think of wine, Sula and Grover's are the only names that hit us almost instantaneously.

Wine is a way of life and a culture that grow over a period of time. As far as the Indian Subcontinent is concerned, wine is very new and people are still in the process of making it part of their drinks menu. Among the urban elite, the well-travelled are taking to wine in increasing numbers. However, this class has pretty much disregarded the Indian wines rubbishing their quality. They have aligned their wine preference with the imported lot.

A common belief is that we Indians invest little in the quality and the production procedures of the drink. It is because we are unaware of the proceedings involved or not much light is thrown on the procedure of wine production or on which wine one can enjoy with which cuisine. Here the fault lies with the industry. Even if they are producing some of the best wines, they have overlooked the essential need of educating the masses about the wines they produce.

However, while reading Peter Csizmadia-Honigh's book *Wines of India*, one learns that the wine industry of India has indeed come a long way over the last three decades.

Peter, a WSET Diploma holder and recipient of the Geoffrey Roberts Award, has widely travelled across India. He is the first international personality to write a fully illustrated and authoritative guide on Indian wines. His book was unveiled recently in Mumbai.

In early 1986 when Shyamlal Chowgule and Kanwal Grover decided to produce Indian wines, the international market



pretty much resisted the idea, as often the important question asked was: how would one grow grapes in a tropical region like India.

However, Peter, wiser by his experience in India, says, "India has an exciting landscape paving way for different varieties of grapes one can grow in the region."

Peter's book is a lot more than just a guide. It serves as a bible for every wine connoisseur. It gives a detailed account of the Indian wine industry — its history, the challenges it faces, numerous Indian brands of wines and the various varieties they produce, detailed statistics, and also 'Peter's Picks'.

The book is also a perfect guide for those who want to step into the industry. Peter, himself a vineyard owner and wine connoisseur, speaks extensively on viticulture and ideal soils to be used for growing a particular variety of grape (keeping India in mind).

Peter also speaks volumes about the technology involved in wine making, both in the new and old ways. Peter has also given excerpts on how established wine brands have appropriated the marketing and distribution channels for their advantage, and also made a mark in international markets.

The book provides significant insights about each Indian winery or wine manufacturer and the reach of their products. It also gives essential details about their wine varietals, like alcohol content, kinds of grapes that are grown and approximate time for maturing wines. All this is also supported by wonderful images captured by Peter himself and Gábor Nagy.

Peter also sees hurdles in the way of wine growth in India. "In India, each state has separate taxation laws for alcohol. This restricts growth as well as limits wine consumption," he points out. ☺