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Joe Roberts aka 1WineDude Q&A with Joseph & Curtis

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by Joseph & Curtis

Joe Roberts aka [1 Wine Dude](#) is one of the best wine bloggers out there. Always there with terrific insight and a great sense of humor. The cool thing about Joe is how “un-snobby” his approach to wine really is.



Joe used to be a total wine dunce. He is now a wine consultant and musician in the greater Philadelphia area, and authors a freelance wine column for [Playboy.com](#) (go check it out.. you know, for the articles!). Joe holds the Level 2 (Intermediate, with Distinction) and Level 3 (Advanced, with Merit) Certificates in Wine & Spirits from the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) in England. He’s a member of the U.S.-based Society of Wine Educators, holding their Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) qualification. He also holds the Wine Location Specialist (WLS) qualification from the

Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC) and the Instituto dos Vinhos do Douro e Porto (IVDP), and is a member of the Wine Century Club (but that last one's just for geeky bragging rights, really). From 1WineDude.com

Joe was kind enough to spend a couple of minutes with us lets check out what he had to say.

How did your love of wine develop?

I guess like most young white yuppie-types – or at least for guys making young white yuppie-type money – I had a really well-paying job and started looking for stuff on which to spend my cash. That was part of it, at least. The other part was that I loved beer, brewed beer at home, and got sick and tired of being scared to death of wine, and I started wondering how I could tackle that fear. So I actually identified a set of core values – the same ones with which I approached beer – and learned a few “secrets” on the way, and it just totally killed the fear, jump-started my palate, and opened up an entire new universe of pleasure for me in my life (to the point where I’m making it my vocation!). I actually am going to detail all of that in an edutainment style course that will be available in the second half of this year – I’m really stoked about that, because it approaches learning about way in a new way, and it has the potential to really make people’s lives a little bit better and more pleasurable (and I know it works at all levels because I did it myself and it took me from wine moron to where I am today).

Tell me about the “lobster” dinner (scary I even know that)?

That is scary that you know that! In fact, I’m kind of worried that you’re stalking me now! 😊

The lobster dinner was just a home-cooked dinner I had when I was just starting to jump over the wine geek cliff, where I paired a decent Chardonnay with this lobster home-cooked dinner. I don’t even remember what the Chard was, it was pretty good but not amazing, probably one of the entry-level Napa Valley Chards. Anyway, the match clicked in my head and my heart, because the textures of the food and wine just paired up so well, and I was like “whoa... okay, NOW I *get it*, I understand what everyone’s on about when they’re talking about pairing food & wine and making the whole combo greater than the sum of its parts.” That was a small epiphany for me and I started falling in love with wine the way I did with music when I was a pre-teen.



How does one become an “expert” in wine? (and what does that even mean?!)

They don't. That's the short answer. The subject is too big, too broad, and trying to master it misses the point entirely. Wine can give you a lifelong journey of pleasure and fun and knowledge – “expert” implies an end to that which for me would be really sad! Basically, if you want to know wine then get to know what you like and then taste as much as you can. It should be love, in a way, and not study.

What would you tell a new wine cellar owner on how to build out or layer the purchases?

Double whatever storage you think you will need – that's got to be the first rule. Because if you're into it enough to build out a cellar, trust me you are gonna fill it and then some!

2 off the wall wine pairings you enjoy?

I love sparkling wine with just about anything, but it works amazingly well with sushi, or with popcorn (seriously – try that for “movie night” if you're staying in and watching a flick on the big-screen, it's a killer match). I love Cru Beaujolais with fish tacos (with just about any kind of taco or sandwich, actually!).

How important is it to just taste?

In terms of getting to know what you love, it's the single most important thing when it comes to wine appreciation, I think. I mean, if I give something a high rating and you don't like the flavors of it, then that rating shouldn't matter to you AT ALL. Your personal tastes trump all. The other thing is that in the West we eat like someone is going to snatch the food off of the table in 30 seconds if we don't finish it. We shouldn't treat wine that way – fine wine really is meant to evolve in the glass and speak to us, it needs time to tell us everything that it wants to say so we should slow down and listen.

How has technology been changing the wine world (that could be a blog in itself)?

Bluuuu topic there! In terms of production, innovations are happening all the time, like in any consumer goods business. In terms of media, it's been huge – websites like mine have really started to help democratize tastemaking. That's a huge opportunity for wineries and wine brands, because they can engage customers directly. But sadly, most of them f*ck this up or just ignore the potential, and I believe strongly that is going to come back and bite them in the ass. We're already at a point where younger consumers EXPECT brands to talk to them directly on twitter, for example; and they start to “write off” the ones that don't. The wine biz has been lazy, relying on retailers, distributors, and importers and media to tell their stories; but people want stories from the source now, so if a wine producer finds that it doesn't want to talk to those people who are drinking their stuff (and not selling it), then they should be very, very worried about their future.

Opinions on the rating system (RP in specific)?

Ratings had their place in the past, because a lot of crappy wine was being made. There's no doubt in my mind that ratings helped improved that situation... BUT... they are inherently flawed. I hate rating wines – the whole idea of summing up a wine's potential in a number or letter and in a brief snapshot, for something that evolves so much over time... damn, that is really an epically stupid thing to do in my mind. People want the ratings to help them gauge where a wine sits on the continuum of worst-ever to greatest-ever, and I think that ultimately a rating can ONLY give you that and nothing more.



Speaking of RMP specifically, I interviewed the guy, and I'm friendly with Elin McCoy who literally wrote the book on him, so I have at least a little bit of educated insight into him. Bottom line is that he's kind of like George W. Bush – he believes in his mind & heart that what he did/does/will do is all correct, with a kind of moral certainty (with respect to wine, I mean). So while he wouldn't necessarily want his influence to have been so huge, he wasn't going to do anything to stop that, either.

I really see the main issue with wines scores as being their abuse by media and retailers and distributors, etc. They've all overblown the relevance of those scores over many years, to the point where Bordeaux cannot even set prices without having RMP scores for the wines en premier. I mean, what the hell kind of business model is that? That's just insane.

What are your opinions on Washington St?

Tons of potential in WA. I love what Holly Turner is doing at Three Rivers, for example... there are just a lot of producers there who make red wines that are powerful but also have these dusty, tangy, food-friendly edges to them. Loving Syrah generally out of WA, and loving the value for money out of those wines.

Most overrated region?

Bordeaux. Not because it doesn't make some of the finest wines in the world – it does – but because it makes some of the crappiest stuff as well, and because even the finest stuff made there is NOT rare. Tens and tens of thousands of cases are made of it. So yes it can be sublime, but the quality pyramid is completely inverted in Bordeaux. Burgundy, in contrast, is actually made in the tiniest of quantities for much of the best of its wines, so there's some rationale for the insane prices there. In Bordeaux, I just don't see the value for money, and that includes the 2005 and 2009 vintages.

Favorite winemakers?

ACK! This is an impossible question! I will give you one of my faves: Steve Matthiasson in Napa. He makes probably the best white wine in the valley and his Cab Franc is incredible. The Matthiassons are also just good people, and they actually live that sort of romantic ideal we have in our minds about how wine is made and farmed. They do have vineyards in their back yard, they do live on a farm, they are actually peach farmers as well. So they're like a little bit of real

soul in CA winemaking right now. Really excited to see where they go from here.



3 favorite bands?

This is just as hard as the last question! I really dig RUSH, they kind of got me into bass playing through their music, really. The Who were another big influence. Miles Davis from pretty much any period, he could put a band together like no other.

Best guitarist 70's, 80's, 90's, 2000's?

70s: Hendrix is the standard answer but I have to include him because as a bass player he would have been fun to back up, his music could be so rocking yet so funky at the same time; also a huge fan of Pete Townshend, he was the complete package back then.

80s: Adrian Belew... AMAZING player

90s: Ty Tabor from King's X. Sooooo underrated.

00s: The 3 guys form the California Guitar Trio; amazing

musicians.

Favorite restaurants?

Tough one... I've been so fortunate to have been to so many great ones...The French Laundry really is *that* good. There's a local place near my neck of the woods called The Classic Diner, and I have yet to meet anyone from anywhere who has said it isn't the best breakfast they've ever had (yes, that includes Manhattan!). Rui Paula has a restaurant in the Douro in Portugal called DOC that is incredible.

Diamond Dave or Sammy?

Dave had the soul, but Sammy had better chops and a LOT more biz sense. I like them both in VH, in fact VH was the first band to really turn me onto musicianship and vocal harmonies and blues and show tunes.

Any good Pennsylvania wines?

Yes! The trouble in PA is that in bad vintages NOBODY makes decent wine because the grapes simply aren't ripe enough. Gino Razzi at Penns Woods Winery is probably the best winemaker in the state right now.

Why do you feel its important for consumers to have proper wine storage?

Well. for the most part I'd say it's not that important, in terms of wines you're gonna drink right away. But if you splurge on some special bottles, and you want to age them for any appreciable length of time, then you're wasting money if you can't get them someplace cool, out of the light and away from vibration, and on their sides. Basically it's similar to conditions in which we sleep best!