



Robert Parker founded his bi-monthly newsletter, *The Wine Advocate*, in 1978. Since then he has come to be called "the most influential wine writer in the world today." In 2001 he launched eRobertParker.com. Parker's team of Wine Advocates now comprehensively covers the world of fine wines in a way that no one person can any longer do. Parker continues to review the great wines of Bordeaux, the Rhone Valley and California.

Riders on the Storm

October 20, 2009 by Robert Parker

This was the title of an article I wrote over a decade ago in *The Wine Advocate*, and I have updated and revised it over the years in the seven editions of the Wine Buyer's Guide that have appeared in print. I have always taken the position that a sizeable percentage (anywhere from ten to more than 25%) of all the wines sold in the United States are damaged due to exposure to extreme heat. In the mid-1990s, along with the late Steve Verlin, who was in the food product business, we developed a temperature seal that was widely utilized by his companies for perishable foods, and tried using it on cases or bottles of wine to be sure they were shipped properly. This was met with extraordinary resistance from the wine industry when Steve Verlin presented it to the trade at Vin Expo in Bordeaux in the mid-1990s. Now, over ten years later, while we know the high quality importers, retailers, and wholesalers do take precautions, can we be sure they are doing enough?

The reason for this post is that a new technology now exists, and is being increasingly employed, that readers need to be aware of and insist that wineries and retailers use. I will provide a few details here, but all of this information is available by registering on the site www.eProvenance.com. A Boston entrepreneur and wine lover, Eric Vogt, has developed a system whereby a credit card-sized piece of plastic emits radio waves that can be read before, during, and after shipment. Known as Radio Frequency Identification Technology (RFID), the card has a tamper-proof seal and can record the temperature every bottle is exposed to during shipping, whether it is being shipped from Europe to the United States or from Europe to Asia. In their trial runs of this technology over the last several years, tests of even those cases of wine they believed to have been carefully shipped yielded some extraordinary results. Although temperatures are relatively stable while the wine is on a boat, the real danger seems to come before the wine is loaded and after it is off-loaded, during the distribution process, which in many ways is not that surprising. I have always argued that a wine's exposure to temperatures over 75 degrees for more than 24 hours can cause damage to the more delicate white wines, particularly Champagne, and very highly aromatic wines such as Pinot Noir. The research from eProvenance showed that it is likely that an even higher percentage of wine is damaged or destroyed by exposure to temperatures in excess of 90 degrees F for prolonged periods of time.

Badly heated wine and its consequent destruction, either partially or in full, is a far more sinister problem than the small numbers of fraudulent bottles that show up in the marketplace.

For consumers concerned about whether the wines they purchased have been shipped properly, the eProvenance tags, which are tamper-proof, can track a single bottle of wine from its place of origin all the way to its delivery to the wine consumer.

I suggest readers follow the link to www.eprovenance.com, and make themselves aware of the extraordinary research and information as well as service eProvenance provides. This huge step forward in the conservation and protection of wine needs to be adopted by all purveyors of fine wine at every level – from the winery to the broker, the importer to the wholesaler, and of course, to the retailer. Only with consumer outrage and demand can this be fully implemented, so I am enlisting the support of everyone who reads this bulletin board and encouraging them to take a look at what Eric Vogt has accomplished and how effectively his system works.

www.erobertparker.com