



Wine and War: The French, the Nazis, and the Battle for France's Greatest Treasure

By Donald Kladstrup, Petie Kladstrup

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The remarkable untold story of France's courageous, clever vintners who protected and rescued the country's most treasured commodity from German plunder during World War II.

"To be a Frenchman means to fight for your country *and* its wine."

—Claude Terrail, owner, Restaurant La Tour d'Argent

In 1940, France fell to the Nazis and almost immediately the German army began a campaign of pillaging one of the assets the French hold most dear: their wine. Like others in the French Resistance, winemakers mobilized to oppose their occupiers, but the tale of their extraordinary efforts has remained largely unknown—until now. This is the thrilling and harrowing story of the French wine producers who undertook ingenious, daring measures to save their cherished crops and bottles as the Germans closed in on them. *Wine and War* illuminates a compelling, little-known chapter of history, and stands as a tribute to extraordinary individuals who waged a battle that, in a very real way, saved the spirit of France.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Liberty, equality, and fraternity are all well and good, a champion of French culture once remarked. But, he continued, what made France truly superior to its neighbors was the French passion for wine, which "contributed to the French race by giving it wit, gaiety, and good taste, qualities which set it profoundly apart from people who drink a lot of beer."

The commentator may have had a point; after all, write Don and Petie Kladstrup, it was a well-known fact that Adolf Hitler did not like wine. Still, their leader's teetotalism notwithstanding, the Germans showed no distaste for French wine when they invaded France in 1940. Indeed, among the first acts of the occupying army was to seize great stores of wine, sending tens of thousands of barrels to the Third Reich and ordering the conversion of thousands of hectares of vineyards into war production.

Some French vintners, the Kladstrups write in this enjoyable study, went along with orders. Many others, however, including the heads of distinguished houses like Moët et Chandon, engaged in daring and dangerous acts of resistance wherever they could. Some lied about their yields; others built false walls to hide precious vintages; and still others concocted elaborate ruses, such as sprinkling carpet dust into inferior grades of new wine to give it a musty, distinguished flavor. Not every German was fooled, and some partisans of the grape died for their troubles. But some Germans, at considerable risk to themselves, also looked the other way. The Kladstrups fill their pages with memories of the wine war from both sides of the struggle, stories sometimes somber, sometimes amusing, that commemorate those "whose love of the grape and devotion to a way of life helped them survive and triumph over one of the darkest and most difficult chapters in French history." --*Gregory McNamee*

From Library Journal

Husband-and-wife journalists and contributors to Wine Spectator, the Kladstrups recount the dangerous and daring exploits of those who fought to keep France's greatest treasure out of the hands of the Nazis. Whether they were fobbing off inferior wines on the Germans, hiding precious vintages behind hastily constructed walls, sabotaging shipments being sent out of France, or even sneaking people out of the country in wine barrels, the French proved to be remarkably versatile when it came to protecting their beloved wine. The authors craft a compelling read that shifts back and forth between individual tales of bravery, including those of five prominent wine-making families, and the bigger story of how World War II affected the French wine industry. This history should prove popular with readers who appreciated other books detailing the Nazis' looting of treasures, such as Tom Bower's Nazi Gold (LJ 5/15/97) and Hector Feliciano's The Lost Museum (LJ 8/97). Recommended for public and academic libraries. John Charles, Scottsdale P.L., AZ

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From [Booklist](#)

When Nazi armies overran France, they seized for themselves some of France's most valued and prestigious assets: its wines and brandies. The French did their best to conceal some of these priceless assets. The owner of Paris' Tour d'Argent restaurant concealed his most historic wines behind a hastily constructed wall. Families with valuable wine collections tried other subterfuges to conceal their caches. Wineries owned by Jews relied on neighbors to hide their families as well as their wines. Nevertheless, invading armies seized countless cases of notable wines, some of them dating to the mid-nineteenth century. Senior Nazi officials ended up with most of the stash, and Goring, ever the connoisseur, reveled in his cellar as much as in his

stolen art gallery. Abstemious Hitler hardly touched his share of the booty, and many of the best vintages were found intact at war's end. This tale has its heroes and villains, and the Kladstrups tell their story with good attention to human appetites and human frailties on both sides. *Mark Knoblauch*

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