



[The Art of Decanting](#)

Sandra Jordan, Lin...

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## The Art of Decanting: Bringing Wine to Life

By Sandra Jordan

Chronicle Books, 2006

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Review By William I. Lengeman  
III

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Someone more knowledgeable about wine than I would doubtless be able to take a more critical look at The Art of Decanting. Speaking as a wine novice, I admit that I never dreamed that you could say enough about decanting to fill a book, not even a slim one - with lots of photos.

For other novices who might be wondering, "in basic terms, decanting is the pouring of wine into a glass container to aerate the wine and reduce sediment."

Which is a pretty slim premise to build a book around, but there's actually a little more to it than that. After a foreword by Robert Mondavi and the introduction, Jordan, creative director of Jordan Vineyards & Winery, in Healdsburg, California, gets right into decanting proper, or "the magic that happens between the bottle and the glass."

The chapter explores the reasons for decanting and offers a guide to the process - including step-by-step illustrations - while noting that not all experts are in agreement as to whether wine should be decanted at all.

More history turns up in the next chapter, a quick - but informative - examination of the vessels used to store wine. The author notes that "care, time and luck" are "the three essential elements necessary for the keeping and serving of a fine wine," before moving on to a chapter on cellaring.

Fine wines typically improve with storage, says Jordan. The ideal means for doing so is in a cave. Since this is beyond the means of all but the most dedicated - and wealthy - wine lovers, the author offers other more accessible options for stashing your wine.

From there it's more history and practical advice in chapters on Wine Coolers and Monteiths (a device used to chill wine glasses) and a surprisingly absorbing chapter called A History of Corks and Corkscrews.

Even a novice such as I suspects that the topic of wine glasses could probably fill a slim volume of its own, but Jordan covers it nicely in one chapter. There's also a section on Tasting and Appreciating Wines, which includes Tasting Wine: A Primer.

If you're stumped as to what an aumbry or rafraichissoir is, then you'll not want to miss Furnishings For Fine Wines. Among the other furnishings examined in this chapter, the sideboard, which was "once considered so essential, so de rigueur, that it was hardly remarked upon."

Of course, wine rarely exists in a vacuum. Even though this is a book on decanting, the author concludes with recipes for A Vintner's Dinner. The creation of Jordan Estates' executive chef, Udo Nechutnys, it kicks off with an amuse-bouche of Beausoleil Oysters With Ponzu Sauce and follows up with four more courses. Among these, Roasted Sweet Onions With Chanterelle Mushrooms and Shallots-Herb Butter and Coq Au Vin De Sonoma, Macaroni, Et Champignons.

The Art of Decanting is well illustrated, with numerous historical drawings and paintings and so on. The text is also peppered with a wide variety of pertinent quotes from assorted and sundry wine people.

The last word goes to Rob David, Jordan Estates' winemaker. He contributes an Epilogue, in which he nicely sums things up,

"decanting allows us to fully enjoy the sensual experience of tasting a wine as it completes its journey from young grape to mature, complete elixir."

*William I. Lengeman III is a food writer, book reviewer and publisher of [Tea Guy Speaks](#) and [Weird Eats](#).*

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