



Champagne Baby: How One Parisian Learned to Love Wine--and Life--the American Way

Laure Dugas

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One of the best memoirs of 2016 (Library Journal) and winner of the Northern California Book Festival Award! Fresh, charming, and irresistible, Champagne Baby turns a familiar tale on its head: Instead of yet another American seeking the French secret to good living, a Frenchwoman finds her purpose—much to her surprise—in the U.S.

Laure Dugas was born into a family of winemakers from two storied regions of France: Champagne and the Rhône Valley. But she wants little to do with the family business. It is only when her uncle offers to send her to New York City to learn English and represent his wines to the American market that Laure bids adieu to her boyfriend and begins her journey of discovery.

The job, it turns out, is both harder and easier than expected. Laure must speak in a new language about a subject in which she has no expertise. With the pedigree of an expert, even as she feels like a fraud, Laure dives into an industry still dominated by men, winning over restaurateurs and sommeliers, diligently developing her palate, and traveling across the vast country that is her new home.

For the first time, Laure is able to distinguish among the famous wines of her native land. She learns to greet a wine by the nose and judge a bottle not by its industry rating but by the balance of its flavors. Overcoming homesickness, culture shock, and the trials of a long-distance relationship, Laure manages to settle into her new milieu, her wine-glass-half-full attitude turning an eight-month stint into a three-year adventure.

Part coming-of-age memoir, part travelogue, sprinkled throughout with regional maps and wine recommendations, Champagne Baby imparts the critical lessons that pair with both wine and life: You're Better Than the Cheapest Bottle, There's Always Occasion for Champagne, and Trust Your Palate. It encourages readers to view themselves and their surroundings with newfound appreciation, and to raise their glasses with open-mindedness and joy.

Includes maps of wine regions throughout

Champagne Baby: How One Parisian Learned to Love Wine--and Life--the American Way Details

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From Reader Review Champagne Baby: How One Parisian Learned to Love Wine--and Life--the American Way for online ebook

Terry says

I received a free ARC copy of this memoir from Netgalley and am so glad I did!

Laure Dugas is the type of person who fascinates me because she has so much more moxie than I'll ever have. Born in France into a wine-making family, she seizes an opportunity after college to move to New York City and represent her uncle's wines. Despite not being fluent in English and having to leave her boyfriend behind, she plunges into life in New York and embraces all its differences from French culture. Along the way, she learns more about wine than she ever knew she wanted to know and discovers that the wine trade is her passion.

Laure writes with irresistible elan and in such a way that even a novice wine drinker will feel s/he can go buy a bottle of wine and learn to appreciate all the flavors contained therein. She writes about the challenges of a long-distance relationship and about how she decided whether to make a life in New York City or in France; I very much enjoyed her story.

Donna says

I adored this book. I picked it out of the new list at the library and when I first started reading I was uncertain. But, I quickly loved the style of the author's writing and felt like I was talking to an old friend reading it. I edited for a wine column for years (one a week) and I never learned as much about wine as I did from this book. After reading this book, I have a better appreciation for wine and absolutely a better understanding. I would love to read another book about the start of the author's wine bar AND I will absolutely visit her place when I am in Paris.

Zee Monodee says

What an absolutely delightful tale!

Often enough, it reads like fiction - like you're watching a TV show following this charming and at first clueless heroine finding her footing by bluffing her way through at the start, to becoming a true connoisseur at the end. That's the journey - her very personal journey - that the author takes you through in this book. I don't drink, but I absolutely loved Ms. Dugas' take on wine, the wine industry, the terroir of each region of France, how she makes something so totally daunting (you'd expect only trained sommeliers to know all this!) and yet make it fresh, light, relevant, and even fun. One of the best memoirs I've read, hands down!

Ellery says

I enjoyed this book immensely - tagging along as Laure moves to New York as a young 20-something, learns about wine for the first time despite being from a family of Champagne makers in France - and becomes a wine expert while enjoying what America has to offer.

It was a great escape, though almost too good of one, because when I returned from my first round of reading this book, to a table of squabbling kids whining about what I made for dinner that night, it was a rough landing...I was ready to get back to drinking wine with Laure sooner than later.

Rebecca Vincent says

Reading *Champagne Baby* by Laure Dugas is like having an extended conversation with a friend who has an interesting job. Her passion is wine. This book is about wine. This book is about how she didn't have a passion for wine. Then she did. Wine pulled her up from her roots, swished her around the American landscape, and plunked her back in her terroir.

The big pitch on this book seems to be "Look! A Frenchwoman moved to the U.S. and learned about wine (instead of the other way around!)." But that's not the essence of this book. Her cultural reflections and insights are interesting flavors in her story but not the dominant thrust. To say this is a travel memoir is a disservice to the knowledge, perspective, and thoughtful consideration Dugas pours into the book.

She tells her story not so much to say, "Look! A Frenchwoman came to the U.S. and learned about wine!" but so that she can say, "I see you sitting there a little intimidated by this bottle, but let's open it up and explore it. Trust me, it's amazing. Even if it is terrible and corky."

She tells you, try this! Here are some things to know about that. Let me tell you a story about when I tried this. Look over here! Oh, this reminds me....Consider! And remember that time? She's telling you as a friend because she herself has traveled the road between ambivalence to passion, and the part that is most interesting to her is the road itself. Her credibility comes from her personal story with wine and her professional expertise. She could not have written this book successfully in the absence of either.

If you have any interest or curiosity in wine this is the best introduction. Grab a glass and sit back for a story. And then keep the book around for a reference. Dugas includes hints, history, myths, and legends of the wine industry throughout the book and in particular at the end of each chapter.

Sam Sigelakis-Minski says

First of all, a big thank you to Penguin's First to Read Program for this beautiful memoir.

Champagne Baby tells the story of 22-years-old Laure Dugas as she navigates a world of wine that she was born into, but denied up until now. Laure was always one to beat to her own drummer, but when her uncle makes her an offer to be his brand ambassador in the United States for six months, how can she refuse? Her interests had never coincided with the family business, but a chance to travel and prove her own worth was one she couldn't pass up. Ticket to New York City in hand, Laure marches headlong into a new career, a new challenge, and a new life. Who will she be at the end of this journey of self-discovery?

Laure Dugas has written a spectacular delayed coming-of-age tale that I think is really relevant even today, despite being set in the mid-2000s. Most of us don't have a clear path in our early twenties, and Laure shows how to handle that dilemma with an open mind and strong heart. Being 24 and only discovering what I want to be recently, I found myself empathizing a lot with Laure's choices. Her guts in coming to a new country and learning a new language, faking it until you make it in a man-driven world, and eventually finding what you love is so inspiring.

The other wonderful aspect of this book is, of course, the wine. Interspersed in Laure's memoir are whole passages about everything to do with wine, whether it be the terroir (earth the vines grew in), different notes to taste in wine, or even the basics of acidity, tannins and notes. This style can run the risk of sounding dry to a reader (no pun intended), but Laure keeps it so fresh, treating wine like a friend instead of like the intimidating industry that she now participates in. I ended up screenshotting and bookmarking page upon page of useful wine information, even going as far as being able to use that knowledge recently at a gathering with friends. (Hint; Try the 2005 Bordeaux.)

The only cons to this memoir were the slow pace in the beginning and the speed in the ending, ironically enough. I found that Dugas's decision to come to the US was written in a drawn out manner, as well as her first month in the states. The last portion, the "of age" in her coming of age tale, I can understand rushing since she is living it as of now, however that didn't stop me from wanting more. I am a sucker for a happy ending.

A solid four stars to a wonderful life!

Pam Tickner says

An entertaining audio for a long drive. A twist on the usual Anglo cultural adventure in an European setting. I loved all the wine information and feel I've had a crash course in French wines.

Karen says

Author Laure Dugas knows wine, her passion is clear. This "Champagne Baby" grew up surrounded by grapes, her family in the business of making Champagne. Laure's mother's grandmother cultivated the family's first vines in Champagne in the 1930's and wine grapes continue to grow in the family's vineyard.

Laure knew very little about the business when at 23 she was asked by her uncle to move to the United States to market his wines. She charges headlong into quite an adventure, leaving home and family, moving to New

York City knowing very little English and knowing no-one. Luckily, this girl is smart and she is naturally gifted.

She begins a fascinating journey on the road to success and has a significant amount of info to convey about the wine industry. I enjoyed her observations and insight as an industry insider.

I am a wine devotee. I consider myself a rookie, my knowledge hovering somewhere around mediocre. I basically know what I like to drink and why. I learned a lot from Laure's book and found myself highlighting numerous passages. Perhaps one day I will impress friends with my newfound knowledge. I recommend this good read for wine enthusiasts.

Kathy says

I really enjoyed this memoir of a young French woman making her way in America, particularly because it centers around her education about French wine along the way--something I was interested in learning more about, too. Laure Dugas was raised in a Champagne-producing family but learns the French wine trade from the unlikely vantage point of the US. There's a little bit of romance and cross-cultural intrigue along the way, but I was especially interested in the interchapters where she offers a crash course on French wine, what to look for, and how to appreciate it. An enjoyable, interesting summer read!

Janilyn Kocher says

I received this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. The way I read this book is the antithesis of how one is supposed to drink wine: I downed the book instead of sipping and savoring. Champagne Baby is a story of a French woman's journey to find her footing in a new realm that has been in her family history for generations. While the author's descriptions of the Nuances Of the wine industry were interesting, the real flavor was her story. It was fascinating. At the end she alluded to another story left to tell, how she met and married her husband. I would like to open up a bottle of wine and settle in for that next chapter, if it is ever forthcoming.

Dixie says

I enjoyed the opportunity to see how the American culture is viewed by young foreign professionals, both the stereotypes and the actual experience. Laure's insights were unique in that she traveled for her work and was able to see many different socio-economic pictures of American life as she traveled across our nation. Pulling back the curtains in the field of marketing/merchandising, with wine being the product being merchandised, revealed various attitudes toward cost and value. I enjoyed the discussion section in each chapter that told about wines, growing regions, tasting considerations, etc. I particularly appreciated the message to savor what is right in front of you, rather than worry about what else is "out there" that you aren't experiencing at the moment.

My thanks to Netgalley for the opportunity to read this and offer my opinion.

Karen Kay says

I received this ebook free from Netgalley.Com in exchange for my honest review.

Laure, the champagne baby, epitomizes the statement "fake it 'til you make it". Accepting a job selling her family wine, takes her from her homeland Paris to the U.S. She speaks no English and knows basically nothing about wine. As she learns and grows into her knowledge of wine (and English) she learns to love her job, and wine.

I think one of the best descriptions of her growing love for wine is this, "Drinking the Cheval Blanc was one of the most overwhelming sensory experiences in my life. I tasted cherry, plum, tobacco, chocolate, damp earth, and more I couldn't even name, rising and falling and merging and separating all within seconds, drawing out into a velvety sweetness like a long violin note."

This book is written in memoir style with tons of data about wine and their classifications which was kind of dry reading. Pun intended. I give this book a solid 3 out of 5 stars.

A.M. Dunnewin says

I really enjoyed this book. Not only did it allow you to sip on the coming-of-age story of a young French woman, it made love and wine a pleasurable pairing. The story itself was entertaining and moved at a good pace, and my favorite aspect was that it added information about wine that made the entire reading experience refreshing and delightful.

Nari says

This book is half memoir half beginners guide to wine. I liked both aspects and I think Laure did a great with transitioning from one to another. It's weird to think that we're almost the same age and she's accomplished so much in a short span of time.

She had a whirlwind romance with New York City, although she eventually found her way back home to France. I wish she expanded more on what about the US (or possibly just New York) that she felt drawn to. What were the perks? There were portions that she repeated often, but she is well aware of her filial connections in the wine industry. I appreciated her honesty about how she began her career in the wine trade.

This isn't a glamorous memoir; it's more about wine than about Laure, really. Her easy-going writing style simplified some of the more complex concepts of wine.

Philippa says

A memoir that is also partly a beginner's guide to wine, Champagne Baby is a charming and compelling

read. Laure Dugas is in her early twenties, she wants to learn English and wants an adventure - she finds herself off to NYC for six months to work in marketing/sales for her uncle's winery. What ensues is all kinds of fun (and drama!) as Laure gets to know and love America, and wine, and as she figures out how much of her old life in Paris will survive the journey to the new one. And every chapter contains some wonderful, poetic wine tasting notes that makes you want to open a bottle to drink while you're reading!

Anyone who has moved to another country will probably relate to her first few weeks in America - it sounded a lot like my first few months in London (apart from going to terrible English classes!) where you've got nowhere to live (permanently), you're exhausted, stressed, running out of money and wondering whether the whole thing was a huge mistake! I also really related to her various tales of expat life. It does take time to find your feet in a new country, and many friends you make are also expats, which means they tend to come and go, as their visas, relationships and jobs dictate. It can be a tricky life, where things always seem to be changing. Champagne Baby is not only about leaving home - it's about coming home as well.

There are some great highlights of Laure's journey, that are evocative and well-written - I enjoyed seeing how she became so passionate about wine, and more confident in herself. By the end of the book she is far more certain about what she wants in life, and isn't afraid to move on from something that isn't working (even if, once upon a time, it did). I also really enjoyed her last job in America, working for Mark - he sounded like a real character!

It's a great read about finding purpose, confidence and your passion. Like a good bottle of wine, this enjoyable book reveals more layers the more you delve into it.
