

BOOK CLUB KIT

"Smart and very funny, satirical but deeply felt, *Wine People* is a shrewd, clear-eyed love letter to wine and the people who make, import, and drink it."

—CHLOE BENJAMIN, author of *The Immortalists*

Wine People



A Novel

MICHELLE WILDGEN

GET READY TO HOST YOUR BOOK CLUB KIT!

We're so glad you've decided to host a *Wine People* book gathering! Inside this kit you'll find a Q&A with Michelle, tips on wine tasting, wine cocktail recipes, discussion questions, and more. Stories are best when shared, and we hope your time together is fun and engaging!

If you're new to hosting a book event, don't worry! We've got you covered. Here's what you'll need to do to get ready for your gathering:



- Determine if you'll meet virtually or in-person.
- Save the date!
- Reach out to your local bookstore. You can direct your guests to purchase the book through the store ahead of time or coordinate with the store and have them sell the books at your event.
- Invite friends! Make sure your guests know they're welcome to attend even if they haven't read or finished the book!
- Plan to have some food and drinks, but don't stress about this! Ask a few friends to each bring a favorite bottle of wine. Make some of the wine cocktail recipes we've included in this guide. Meet up at a local winery and discuss the book as you sip.
- Relax and have fun! Book clubs are enjoyable because of the connections and the community. Allow everyone a chance to share or ask questions, and be mindful of those who haven't had a chance to read the book by discussing the themes rather than the specifics.

READING GUIDE

1. When you first meet Wren and Thessaly, they seem very different (and aren't really friends). What was your first impression of Wren? How about Thessaly?

2. While they are in France and Germany, Wren and Thessaly seem to be getting closer—or at least are more open to admitting that they are in competition.

Was this a surprise to you? When they return to New York, do you think they are better friends or competitors?

3. After returning to New York, Thessaly meets Nick, an emergency medicine resident. He seems deeply interested in her, which she likes. Their relationship builds around food and wine, though he doesn't know much about wine.

Do you think there is an imbalance in their relationship from the beginning, or do they seem like a good match? Why do you think Nick felt like such a revelation to Thessaly?

4. While Thessaly is spending more and more time with Nick, Wren is going out with the sales team and trying to show the people at work (particularly Jonathan) that she is capable of more than she's done at the company thus far.

When Wren and Jonathan go out to lunch, you learn more about their relationship and some of the things they've experienced together, but there's also an air of uncertainty. What do you think Jonathan is hiding at this point? Is Wren wasting her time trying to make herself stand out at Lionel Garrett?

5. In Chapter 8, Thessaly has two experiences in which those close to her comment on her drinking—first with Wren and then with Nick.

Did you notice initially how much Thessaly was drinking? Did it seem like a red flag to you? Why or why not? What did you think of Nick's reaction to how much Thessaly drank at the boxing bar?

6. In Chapter 10, Thessaly and Nick go to Arthur Avenue in the Bronx. While Thessaly manages to show Nick that she's not too hungover for the walk, her faculties aren't all present, and she ends up stepping in front of a moving car. While her injuries are minor, her relationship falls apart quite quickly.

Did you see Thessaly and Nick's breakup coming? Do you think his response to her drinking, and the accident, were reasonable? Why or why not?



READING GUIDE

7. In Chapter 9, Jonathan and Wren return to Germany with Gavin for Hermann Fuchs' funeral. Initially, Jonathan is upset that Lionel isn't coming, but Gavin is actually very kind to Jonathan, who has lost a friend. Then, in Chapter 11, everything changes.

When you got to Chapter 11 and learned that Gavin had left Lionel Granger and gone into business with Elke Fuchs, were you surprised? Why or why not? Were there clues in either Chapter 9 or in Gavin's earlier interaction with Elke and Hermann? How do you think Gavin's departure changed things for Wren and Thessaly?

8. Wren and Thessaly's social dinner goes incredibly well, and their luck seems to continue in Verona.

Did you think Wren and Thessaly would get promoted? Why do you think they work together so well?

9. After returning from Verona, Thessaly runs into Nick outside of a bookstore, and it does not go the way she had hoped. She ends up getting extremely drunk and calling on Wren for support.

Does this moment change Wren and Thessaly's relationship? Why or why not?

10. On page 172, Greg is announced as the new sales and operations director.

Did this surprise you? Why or why not?

11. When we meet up with Wren and Thessaly again, they are in Madison, Wisconsin, and have started their own company, Passerine Imports. They have some disagreements, but running the company seems to be going well for them. And then comes Alice.

When you first meet Alice, what do you think of her? Did you think she was going to be good for Passerine Imports? Why or why not?

12. On page 194, Wren's alcoholic father shows up and Thessaly invites him to stay. He insists that he is sober, though that quickly seems to not be the case.

Why was this such a tough experience for Wren? How do you think her childhood experiences with her father impacted how she built her relationship with Thessaly?



READING GUIDE

13. Thessaly begins pulling away from Wren, missing company events, including the one where Wren meets Martin, the beverage director for a large chain of steakhouses. After deciding they want to work with Martin, Wren and Thessaly give the account to Alice.

When did you realize Alice might be hurting Wren and Thessaly's company? Would you have handled things the way Wren did? Why or why not?

14. When Thessaly goes to Le Marche, things start to really fall apart. Ultimately, Thessaly chooses to stay and watch a portable bottling process instead of returning on her scheduled flight, missing an important conference. When she gets back to Madison, she discovers that Wren has made an important purchase that they hadn't yet agreed on.

Do you think there was one moment that led to Wren and Thessaly's unraveling, or do you think it was a series of moments? How do you think this unraveling led to the end of the book?

15. Did you expect Wren and Martin to get together? Why or why not?

16. At the end of the book, Thessaly is finally pursuing her longtime dream of creating wine. What are the biggest moments that led Thessaly to finally make her own wine? What do you think held her back for so long?

17. Having read the entire book, do you think Wren and Thessaly will be able to rebuild their relationship? How do you think their relationship will be different from here on out?

18. How did Wren and Thessaly change throughout the book, and how did your impressions of them change?

19. What did Wren and Thessaly mean to each other? How did they push each other to be better?



Q&A WITH MICHELLE

1. What inspired you to write a book about the wine-selling (and making) process?

Right after graduating from college, I worked for a restaurant called L'Etoile in Madison—this was many years ago, and it had already been around for 20-some years at that point (still is), with a chef who was considered the Alice Waters of the Midwest. I went there hoping they'd teach me about food and wine, which they did, and it also showed me the world of restaurants as it was lived by dedicated professionals rather than, say, me as a college student slinging pizza. That was a huge eye opener, and so was the wine program and hearing about the work of wine importing and winemaking. I was always struck by the way wine encompassed worldwide travel and relentless dedication to one place, high-end fanciness and straight-up farming, culture and science... I could go on. I had this interest in my back pocket for years while I wrote about restaurants and other things, and a few years ago, I just thought, I have always wanted to dig into wine. I needed a novel topic that I could embrace, that I knew would be great fun. So wine importing it was.

2. Can you tell me about your research and writing process? How did you learn about the wine industry?

The first thing I did was start talking to my friend who had worked in wine importing for many years. There are times when you interview people and it's really hard, because you just aren't seeing the world the same way in terms of what details are compelling and what they think is notable versus what I think is notable. This was not one of those times: she was a novelist's dream interview, who had an eye for all the nuances and emotional undercurrents and the stories and anecdotes that embodied the larger ideas. She was a goldmine, and her fingerprints are all over the book, though any flaws are mine. From there I just asked around for people in wine, and I talked to anyone who would talk to me, not even knowing what I wanted. Early on, this was all about gathering context and info, figuring out the fault lines and tensions that might create story, what areas I found most interesting.

3. *Wine People* is also about friendship and chasing your dreams. How do you think those two things intersect in real life?

Ideally, they feed each other, right? You follow passions and your friends support you and along the way you find additional like-minded people and build your community. And it has often worked that way for me, which is wonderful. I'm a big believer in friends outside your wheelhouse, which is so good for broadening the worldview and just eavesdropping on the knowledge from people who live and work in other fields. (One of the many upsides of middle age is that everyone has amassed so much expertise in so many things.



Q&A WITH MICHELLE

My friends impress the shit out of me.) But of course you can get tripped up by envy, or inadequacy, stepping outside of established roles we thought we'd agreed to, and sometimes you can work with and acknowledge all of that, and sometimes it eats away at the foundation.

Friendships are complicated! I could write of nothing else! Also, maybe because I work alone so much of the time, I'm fascinated by professional alliances and relationships, by a concerted decision to yoke yourself to another person and take the bet that you will be compatible. We think it is all about numbers and profits but emotions and interpersonal needs are more central than a lot of people realize. It says so in the book, and I still believe that this professional relationship is very like a marriage. But marriages can struggle and so can partnerships: in Wren and Thessaly's case, they make a bet on wanting to live the same way, build a company that serves similar needs, and as they grow and figure themselves out, they may have to recalibrate.

4. What books or authors inspired you to write this book?

Apologies to all the people who have heard me say this before, but it remains true: *Happy All the Time* by Laurie Colwin is seminal. She once said it is a book about anxious people, and it is, but I read it for comfort and for pleasure in her food details and her overall wit. The childhood chapters of Gabrielle Hamilton's *Blood, Bones & Butter*. Alice Munro (though food and wine aren't her thing, she is all about undercurrents, and I love a good undercurrent).

5. What is the most surprising thing you learned about wine while writing this book?

I don't know that it is something I learned so much as it sunk in as people talked about it: that there are so many roads into a love of wine, because its pleasures are so varied. That its mutable nature is both a beauty and a risk—to encourage the transformation that creates it is such hard work, and so delightful that it works. But once that lovely thing is gone (because you drank it, opened it, spilled it, let it age too long), it's never coming back.

6. If you could make your own wine, what would you call it and what grapes would you use?

Oh boy. Tough call. I think it would be a pinot noir rosé. And titles are often very hard for me, so I don't trust myself not to give you something truly terrible that will undermine any credibility I may have amassed. Let's just assume that the wine name will be poetic and hilarious, one of these days.



Q&A WITH MICHELLE

7. Throughout the book, Thessaly talks about her lifelong dream to make her own wine. Have you ever had a dream like that? What made you pursue it (or do you think you will)?

Mine is making novels, honestly! So that I get to do it at all is living the dream.

8. If you could dive deeper into the story of anyone in the book, whose story would you write next?

I love this question. I am torn because some of the characters I enjoyed writing the most for their intensity or oddity, like Gavin or Legs or Alice, are fun precisely because of their mystery. I do wonder how Sabrina's story would read—she is one of the sales reps who works with Wren and Thessaly, a decade or so older than they are, with a family where they're single. To her, their story would be that of a slightly younger but, I think, very different feeling generation of women and wine professionals. She's one of those characters I suspect has a whole inner life I didn't have room to unpack here.

9. What are some of the books you've been reading recently? Any books you're looking forward to?

I can't wait to read *Hello Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano and Rebecca Makkai's *I Have Some Questions For You*. I'm currently reading *The Gospel of Wellness* by Rina Raphael for research purposes, and it's hitting all the right buttons

10. Are you doing more writing? What other projects are coming up for you?

I'm just getting started on something new, and it's probably too soon to describe it because as soon as I do, I'll ruin it for myself. I can tell you that it does involve at least one slightly monstrous parent, which has been fascinating to me the last few years. I'm not sure why—my own parents are not monsters; they're quite lovely and supportive and never let on when I was a child that I was also an absolute weirdo. Maybe that's why I am so interested in the ones who are toxic, because I'm trying to imagine it. Maybe I just fear I am that monstrous parent. What can I say? I just go where my psyche goes and hope I can figure out what I'm trying to say.



ARE YOU A TRUE OENOPHILE?

There is an oenophile—a wine connoisseur—in all of us! Take this quiz to find out how much you really know about wine.

1. How often do you drink wine?

- A Several times a week, usually with dinner or when going out. (1pt.)
- B Every night of the week—I like to try different wines and try to pair them with foods they go well with. (2pts.)
- C I often drink it with dinner, and you can frequently find me at vineyards or wine stores doing tastings. (3 pts.)

2. How many steps are there in wine tasting?

- A 3 - Swirl. Sniff. Sip. (1pt.)
- B 5 - See. Swirl. Sniff. Sip. Savor. (3pts.)
- C 7 - Splash. Settle. See. Swirl. Sniff. Sip. Savor. (2pts.)

3. How are different colors of wine made?

- A Different colors of grapes (purple = red; green = white). (2pts.)
- B Natural food dyes: raspberries, white flower petals, beets, white cabbage, etc. (1pt.)
- C The more time the grape juice spends with the grape skin, the darker the color of the wine. (3pts.)

4. What are the six most popular grape varieties?

- A Chardonnay, Zinfandel, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Riesling, & Syrah. (1pt.)
- B Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, & Chardonnay. (3pts.)
- C Riesling, Zinfandel, Bordeaux, Sangiovese, Chardonnay, & Gewurztraminer. (1pt.)

5. What does swirling the glass before you taste it do?

- A Helps you see the tannins. (1pt.)
- B Make sure the wine is properly mixed and the sediments aren't resting at the bottom of your glass. (2pts.)
- C Aerates the wine to release the aromas. (3pts.)

6. What makes Champagne special?

- A There are special grapes that must be used in order for a wine to be considered Champagne. (2pts.)
- B The wine must be made in the Champagne region of France in order to be called Champagne. (3pts.)
- C Nothing, really—Champagne and Sparkling Wine are interchangeable. (1pt.)

Add up your points, and then see where you're at below!

6-11 pts.: You've got an interest in wine, but there's still more to learn! It's time for you to go to a wine tasting or two to test your skills and try new flavors.

12-15 pts.: You're well on your way to being a true wine connoisseur! You've got a great understanding of how to make wine and might even be regularly consuming it. Maybe it's time to take a trip to a vineyard and get your hands dirty!

15-18 pts.: Well hello, oenophile! You love wine, and you're not shy about sharing your passion with others. There's always more to learn and more to try—we'll see you at the vineyard!



A SELECTION OF WINE PEOPLE DISHES AND PAIRINGS TO DRINK WITH THEM

Thank you, as always, to Molly Moran of Table Wine for her pairings!

Iberico ham and chorizo

Amontillado Sherry or Rioja (particularly traditional style Crianza)

Schnitzel and spaetzle

Austrian Gruner Veltliner or German Pinot Noir (particularly from Baden, Germany)

Thai red curry

Off-dry Riesling, fruit-forward Rosé, or low-tannin Spanish Garnacha

Octopus fritters, spinach with bonito flakes, duck and scallion skewers, fried squid with spicy mayonnaise

Sparkling Brut Rosé or California Sauvignon Blanc

Vegetarian bean soup

New World Pinot Gris or lighter-bodied Zinfandel

Selection of sushi

Cremant de Bourgogne or Old World Pinot Noir

Salumi, olives, cheeses

Greek Assyrtiko or Sicilian Nero d'Avola

Risotto with baccala

Spanish Albariño (particularly from Val do Salnés, Rias Baixas, Spain) or Muscadet Sèvre et Maine Sur Lie

Roasted guinea hens

Beaujolais-Villages (or a specific Cru) or Chenin Blanc (particularly French or American)

Lo mein, roast duck, and flowering chives

New World Pinot Noir

Grilled hanger steak with chopped rosemary and fennel and frisée salad

Malbec or Chianti Classico



WINE CORK PLANTERS

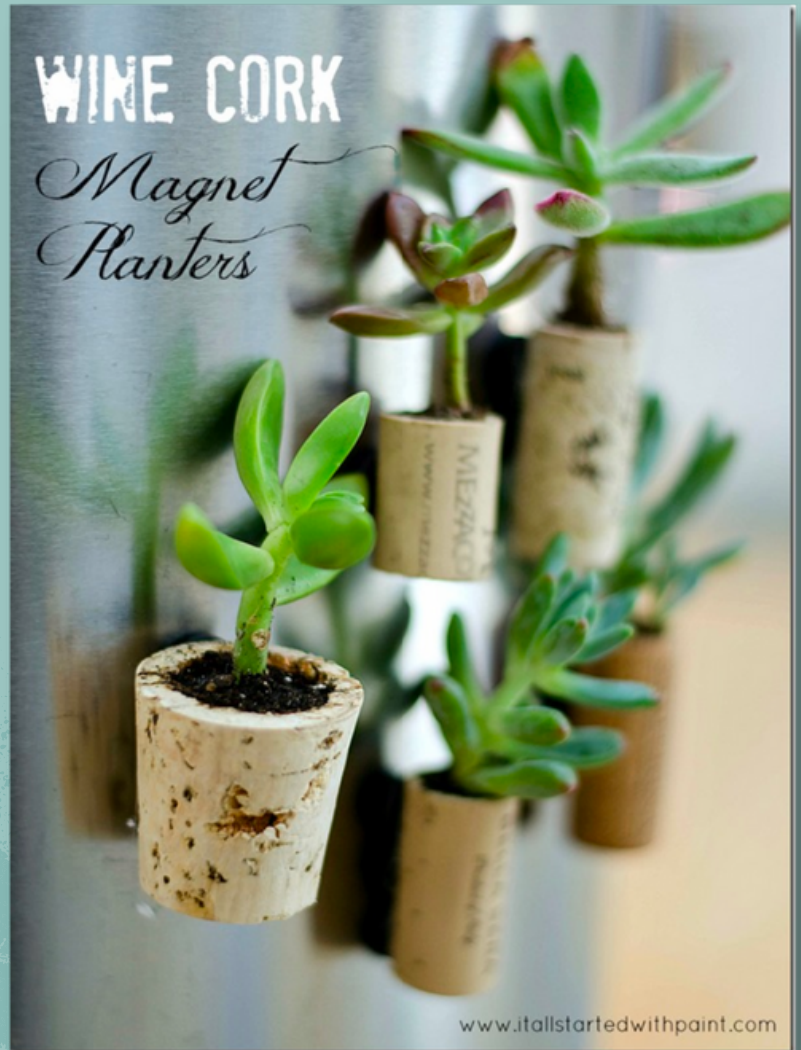
After a night of wine tasting and chatting about *Wine People* with your book club, you'll have some corks lying around. Try using them to make mini succulent planters – not only is this craft cute, but it's the perfect way to reuse wine corks!

The best part?! You probably already have all the supplies on hand!

- Wine cork
- Potting soil
- Knife
- Glue gun
- Small magnet
- A succulent

Start by cutting out the center of the cork with a steak knife. Stop when you're about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down the cork. Use the glue gun to stick a magnet on the side of the cork.

Fill the center with potting soil and add a cutting of a succulent. Drizzle with water and you're all done! We love the idea of sticking these to your fridge, but they can go on any magnetic surface!



WINE COCKTAIL RECIPES



Your wine-themed book club meeting is the **PERFECT** opportunity to savor a summery wine cocktail. We've included some options that are both delicious and super simple to make. You and your guests will love sipping on these as you dive into *Wine People!*

WATERMELON MINT WINE COOLER

Ingredients:

- ½ of a small, seedless watermelon
- 3 cups white Riesling
- 3 tablespoons mint syrup
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 ounces club soda
- Fresh mint (garnish)

For the mint syrup:

- ¾ cup white sugar
- ¾ cup water
- ⅓ cup fresh mint leaves

Make the cocktail:

First, start with the mint syrup! Combine your sugar and water in a small saucepan over medium heat. Once the sugar has dissolved and small bubbles form around the edges of the pan, remove from heat and add the mint leaves. Steep the mint for 15 minutes, then strain the syrup to remove the leaves.

Blend the watermelon until it's completely liquified. Mix in the rest of the ingredient and serve over ice with some fresh mint leaves to garnish! Serves 6.

Recipe from [The Wimpy Vegetarian](#)



WINE COCKTAIL RECIPES



PINEAPPLE PROSECCO PUNCH

Ingredients:

- 3 cups pineapple juice
- 3 cups seltzer water
- 1 (750-mL.) bottle Prosecco
- 1 cup vanilla vodka
- 2 cups sliced pineapple
- 2 peaches, thinly sliced
- 1/4 c. fresh mint, plus more for garnish
- 3 c. ice

Make the cocktail:

Add pineapple juice, seltzer water, prosecco, vodka, pineapple, peaches, and mint to a punch bowl. Stir to combine, then add ice! Garnish with a sprig of fresh mint. Serves 10.



WINE COCKTAIL RECIPES



WHITE WINE PEACH AND MANGO SANGRIA

Ingredients:

- 1 bottle pinot grigio, or other dry white wine
- 1 ¼ cups mango rum
- 1 ¼ cups peach schnapps
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 3 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 ½ cups lemon-lime soda
- Ice
- Peach slices to garnish
- Mango slices to garnish

Make the Cocktail:

Pour the wine, mango rum, peach schnapps, citrus juices, and lemon-lime soda into a pitcher. Stir the ingredients, then add ice! Serve in glasses garnished with a peach and mango slice. Serves 16!

Recipe from [The Spruce Eats](#)



WINE COCKTAIL RECIPES



CLASSIC PEACH BELLINI

Ingredients:

- 1 pound fresh or frozen peaches (plus extra for garnish!)
- ¼ cup fresh or frozen strawberries
- ½ cup peach schnapps
- 1 bottle sparkling wine

Make the cocktail:

Blend the peaches, strawberries, and peach schnapps on high speed until smooth. Divide the mixture into six glasses, then top with prosecco! Garnish with a peach slice. Serves 6.



WINE TASTING TIPS



There's no doubt that Thessaly and Wren are wine-tasting pros, but you don't need tons of experience to savor a glass of wine. By following just a few simple steps, you can lead your book club in a wine tasting that will let your inner sommelier shine!

Pull out your favorite bottle, and let's get started!

- 1. See:** Start out by simply looking at your glass of wine! Take a moment to notice the color and see if there is any sediment in the glass.
- 2. Swirl:** Hold the base of your glass and move it in a circular motion. This helps aerate the wine and will bring out any hidden aromas!
- 3. Smell:** Try inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth! What do you notice – does the wine smell fruity? Floral? Herbal?
- 4. Sip:** Swirl the wine in your mouth to pick up on different sensations – more acidic wines will feel smooth, while a wine with a higher alcohol content will leave your mouth feeling warmer.
- 5. Savor:** This step is super easy – just think about your experience! Would you recommend this wine to a friend? Is there something unique about it that impresses you? This is the time to compare notes and share your thoughts!

Source: [HERE](#).



SCAN AND EXPLORE!



The QR code is a portal into the world within the book, its origins, and everything in between. All you need to do is scan the code with your phone and you're in!

Some funs things inside:

Wine People playlist: Sit back, relax, and listen to the perfect wine tasting playlist. Whether you're having a wine night with friends, enjoying dinner with your partner, or just sitting solo under a warm blanket with a good book in your lap (perhaps *Wine People*!), this playlist will fit any wine lover's mood.

An excerpt from the book: Haven't read *Wine People* yet? We have an editor-picked excerpt from the novel you can read for free. It will make you want to get your own copy that much more.

A map of wine spots in the book: Find a great wine spot where you live! We've compiled all of the places you can taste, appreciate, and explore wine that were mentioned in the book so that you can channel your inner Wren or Thessaly.

An interview with Michelle: Michelle talks about what inspired the book, where her love of wine and food came from, and the books she's reading.

A list of wine and food pairings: Ready to throw your own wine tasting party? Or maybe you just want to taste a couple of great wines with the food that complements them best. Michelle has the perfect list of wine and food pairings to get you started. Try them out and share your favorites with us @zibbybooks with #winepeople

Photo album of wine research: Journey through both Europe and America's wine countries with Michelle as she recounts all of the research, wine tasting, and conversations that made *Wine People* into a novel.



SCAN AND EXPLORE!



A book trailer: Get excited for *Wine People* by watching its 30-second cinematic book trailer that proves books deserve just as much glam as films.

Discussion guide questions: In-depth and thoughtful questions to get you and your book club started in a great conversation.

"Chase Your Dreams" worksheet: Want to act on a lifelong dream like Wren and Thessaly, but just don't know where to begin? Fill out this worksheet and see what you can do today to make your dream come to life.

"Are You A True Oenophile?" Quiz: Do you know wine as well as you think you do? Find out for yourself and share your results with us @zibbybooks with #winepeople

A Letter from the Publisher, Zibby Owens: Zibby shares what she loves most about *Wine People*, what to expect from the story, and why you will love it, too!

There is so much to explore! We made this portal because we are readers who love to know more, writers who are curious about the process, and people who love characters as we do our trusted friends.

Scan. Share. And above all, enjoy!

