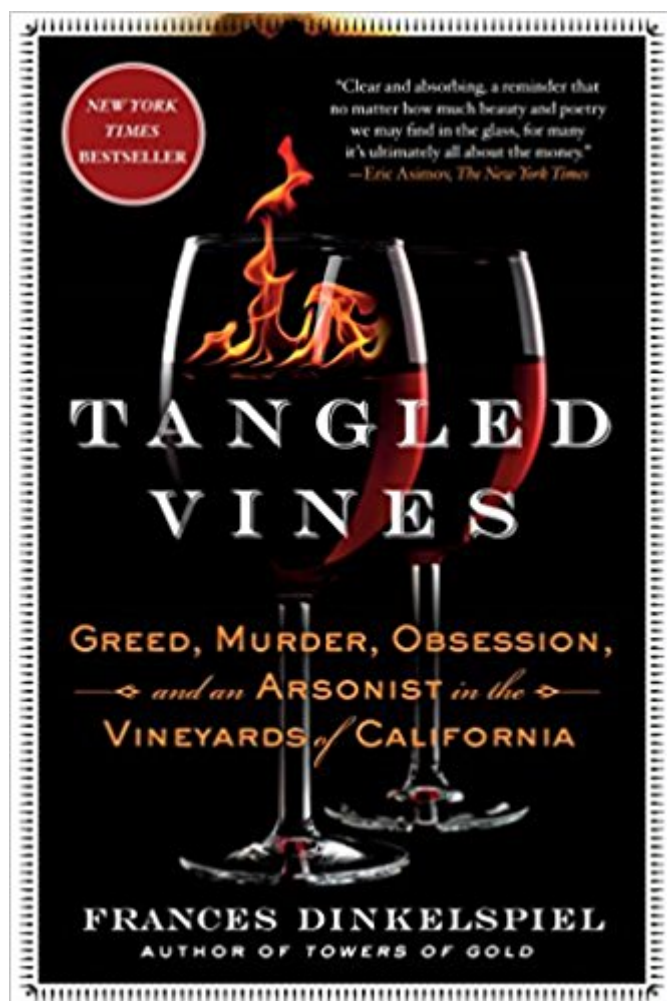


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Tangled Vines: Greed, Murder, Obsession, And An Arsonist In The Vineyards Of California



Synopsis

A New York Times Bestseller On October 12, 2005, a massive fire broke out in the Wines Central wine warehouse in Vallejo, California. Within hours, the flames had destroyed 4.5 million bottles of California's finest wine worth more than \$250 million, making it the largest destruction of wine in history. The fire had been deliberately set by a passionate oenophile named Mark Anderson, a skilled con man and thief with storage space at the warehouse who needed to cover his tracks. With a propane torch and a bucket of gasoline-soaked rags, Anderson annihilated entire California vineyard libraries as well as bottles of some of the most sought-after wines in the world. Among the priceless bottles destroyed were 175 bottles of Port and Angelica from one of the oldest vineyards in California made by Frances Dinkelspiel's great-great grandfather, Isaias Hellman, in 1875. Sadly, Mark Anderson was not the first to harm the industry. The history of the California wine trade, dating back to the 19th Century, is a story of vineyards with dark and bloody pasts, tales of rich men, strangling monopolies, the brutal enslavement of vineyard workers and murder. Five of the wine trade murders were associated with Isaias Hellman's vineyard in Rancho Cucamonga beginning with the killing of John Rains who owned the land at the time. He was shot several times, dragged from a wagon and left off the main road for the coyotes to feed on. In her new book, Frances Dinkelspiel looks beneath the casually elegant veneer of California's wine regions to find the obsession, greed and violence lying in wait. Few people sipping a fine California Cabernet can even guess at the Tangled Vines where its life began.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin; Reprint edition (October 18, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 125011389X

ISBN-13: 978-1250113894

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 115 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #167,457 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #17 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Wine & Spirits > Collecting](#) #62 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > White Collar Crime](#) #180 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Wine & Spirits > Wine](#)

Customer Reviews

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A Best Book for Wine Lovers
The New York Times
One of the Best Wine Books of 2015
The Wall Street Journal
Food & Wine
Finalist for Best Nonfiction Book
The Northern California Independent Booksellers
Finalist for a Northern California Book Award
"Clear and absorbing, a reminder that no matter how much beauty and poetry we may find in the glass, for many it's ultimately all about the money." - Eric Asimov, The New York Times
"From its explosive prologue to the very last sentence, Frances Dinkelspiel has written an utterly riveting true crime book... Unlike... the wine collectors in Tangled Vines, I cannot taste 'the earth, the sun, the sky, and the steady hand of the winemaker in that glass.' But I know a spectacular book when I read one." - The Los Angeles Book Review
"The most engrossing and engaging book about Napa Valley since James Conaway's two-volume saga, 'Napa' and 'The Far Side of Eden.'" - The Washington Post
"Dinkelspiel is at her best... page-turning." - San Francisco Chronicle
"An engaging read" - San Jose Mercury News
"Dinkelspiel's stunning new look at the dark side of California wine, you won't want to get up until you've devoured the entire book... [An] uncommon page-turner. Dinkelspiel has woven skillfully three distinct yet inextricable narratives into a book that will inform and fascinate readers for years to come. While the stories she tells are engrossing on their own, it is her steady journalistic tone, backed by prodigious and painstaking research, that gives this book its power and allure." - Berkeley's "Nosh Weekly"
"More than just a crime story, this is a book about the wealth, passion, and murky reality shaped by life inside the twisted vines of California's most revered crop... An enjoyable read for wine connoisseurs and neophytes alike." - Kirkus Reviews
"The author's gripping descriptions of the fire and its aftermath, her unflinching narrative, and her vast knowledge of the subject matter make this a page-turner for both wine aficionados and casual tasters." - Publishers Weekly
"I gulped down this page-turning chronicle of big egos, bold Cabernets, and brazen wine wars. Frances Dinkelspiel vividly captures the wild early years of California's wine industry as well as the modern crime revealing the dark obsession some people have for wine. I'll never look at a bottle of Napa Valley Cabernet in quite the same way again." - Julia Flynn Siler, New York Times bestselling author of House of Mondavi: The Rise and Fall of an American Wine Dynasty
"The author is deeply rooted in the Golden State's financial history, as anyone knows who read her excellent Towers of Gold. Now we find that terroir's part of that story, too. A family member's bottled heirlooms passed down through generations fall victim to a bizarre crime, and the author's drawn in by a sense of loss, anger, and curiosity. How could even an unhinged

perpetrator of the worst case of wine arson in California history destroy vintages bearing some of the biggest names in West Coast viticulture, and apparently get away with it? Dinkelspiel weaves together strands of past and present in an enthralling narrative that binds the reader to the investigation and to her personal triumph. —James Conaway, New York Times bestselling author of *Napa: The Story of an American Eden* —“History, wine and crime intertwine in this fascinating page-turner. Dinkelspiel travels in time to create a dark and deep portrait of three centuries of California wine culture. —Davia Nelson of NPR’s “Kitchen Sisters” —“Tangled Vines is a captivating account of how a wine connoisseur became one of the most notorious wine criminals in history. Dinkelspiel deftly weaves his true tale into the rich, colorful, and at times shady history of California wine. A delicious read. —Allison Hoover Bartlett, author of *The Man Who Loved Books Too Much: The True Story of a Thief, a Detective, and a World of Literary Obsession*

FRANCES DINKELSPIEL is an award-winning journalist and the author of *Towers of Gold: How One Jewish Immigrant Named Isaias Hellman Created California*. *Towers of Gold* was a San Francisco Chronicle bestseller and named a Best Book of the Year by the Chronicle and the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association. She is the co-founder of the news site *Berkeleyside* and her articles have appeared in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, People, San Francisco Magazine, and other venues. She lives in Berkeley, California.

This is not a book I would have taken off the shelf in a bookstore since I’m not a wine drinker. Our book discussion group picked it and I figured out how many pages I’d have to read a day to finish in time. To the author’s credit, I found myself reading more and more of each day’s allotment, learning about why my wine-loving friends could become so obsessed with this obviously enjoyable way to stay hydrated. I am normally a news junkie, but don’t recall hearing about the disastrous fire that is the focus of this book. Even if I had, I doubt I would have understood what a huge blow this was to the vintners of Napa Valley and other wine-producing areas. Now my problem is which of my other friends I could pass this book on to. That’s a happy dilemma.

Stop what you are doing right now and buy and read this book!! Not only does it ably and entertainingly cover the events surrounding the notorious 2005 Vallejo, California wine warehouse arson that destroyed over \$100 million in wine, and the ensuing investigation and prosecution, but

also provides essential information about the history of the California wine industry (and therefore of California in general). No wine knowledge required in order to be fully swept up in this rich and detailed review of California's role in bringing such a culture-changing commodity into the lives of so many, here and around the world. Also, it includes the added bonus of highlights of some of the most scandalous and damaging instances of commercial wine fraud in American history, past and more recently. The information is engagingly threaded together by fascinating details of the author's own family background in the California wine industry, dating back into the mid-1800s, which lends the narrative an intriguing and attractive personal touch. Sit down on the couch, pour yourself a glass of your favorite vintage, pick up this volume, and let it all flow.....

A well woven story about how an obsessive, delusional man gained trust and betrayed it.,The story first overlays the investigation of an arson fire that devastates families and businesses.It further overlays the history of wine making in CA. Who knew about LA wines of the 19th centrry?The first person style of the reporter's narrative is given heart by the fact that her great, great grandfather's wine, a family heirloom and legendary product was lost in the fire. It also answers questions I've wondered about. I knew the building and saw the fire, but never heard the rest of the story.Now I have--and finished it in two settings.Yep, a real thoughtful page turner.

Amazing history of wine and wine fraud of which I was totally unaware. Very informative, but not in a textbook way. Enjoyed the early history of wine in California that prompted a visit to the John Rains home/museum in Rancho Cucamonga. So much history and info on wineries, regions, process of making and storing wine. A must read for any wine lover, but be warned -- have a glass of your favorite vino at the ready as you read this wonderful book.

This is a sprawling book that tells two stories: the history of the California wine industry, beginning in the middle 1800s around Los Angeles, and a true-story crime of arson by Mark Anderson, who burned down a storage facility in the San Francisco Bay Area to hide his theft of high-end wines in 2005. The stories are knit together by the fact that the author's great-great-grandfather's port and angelica wines were stored in the warehouse and destroyed in the fire.Those stories are the "tangled vines" of the title, and Dinkelspiel renders them beautifully. The early California history is surprising -- slavery, theft, murder. The characters, all real, are interesting -- farmers and winemakers and cops and lawyers. The events unfold at a tremendous pace and kept me turning pages late into the night.

I'm surprised I had not heard about this book before now. I've just finished reading it, and I couldn't put it down, for it's the true story of greed, struggle, murder, arson, deception...the complete history of the California Wine Industry. As a native Californian, raised in Marin...just miles from Napa/Sonoma, I was truly surprised I had never heard the actual history behind the prosperous California wine industry. This fascinating book is written by Frances Dinkelspiel, the great-granddaughter of California's "original vintner" with huge land holdings located in Central California. It reads like pages from a gritty Wild West novel. Men were kidnapped and shot dead for the land growing these vines, land and wine, which would eventually become legend. But back in Sausalito, Ca., one unscrupulous wine salesman ruins the cellars of most of the most-famous Northern California wineries we know today. Shocking, sad, and reprehensible. A must read, even if you only drink beer.

The story of the wine industry in California from the 1800s to the conflagration on Mare Island that incinerated millions of bottles of wine and more dreams than can be imagined. Wine in California has been soaked in tragedy, blood and greed from the get go. The author's relative was one of the original wine barons of California who created some amazing wines. A few precious almost 150 year old bottles of these wines are part of the fire at Wines Central that were lost. The fire was started by a man who had visions of who he was that were bigger than his abilities to finance them to cover his tracks in a scam he created. This story weaves the past and present of the wine industry artfully, the beginning a bit dry but picks up and intrigues the deeper you get into it. A good read if you're into wines.

Dinkelspiel relates the story of an arson fire entwined with a brief history of wine in California. She takes the reader along as she uncovers the background of a family wine inheritance. She helps the reader gain an appreciation for the amount of work - and the number of workers' efforts - that go into a bottle of wine one can buy at a local store. The loss of some of that wine, while most certainly a "first world problem," is related in a way that honors the labor and love that went into its manufacture and bottling.

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