

Jancis Robinson

1. Is a desire to experience the world of wine in ways that only a few can and in ways that one could not otherwise afford (i.e. the benefits in the form of samples, events, trips, press junkets, etc) acceptable as part of a career in wine writing (so long as one avoids conflicts of interest and maintains journalistic integrity)? Please provide a reason for your answer or some elaboration.

Speaking personally, I think horse and cart are in the wrong order here. I've been lucky enough to benefit from increasing access as my own career has burgeoned.

But if you are talking theoretically, and the gist of your question is 'Is it acceptable for someone to develop a career as a wine commentator wholly or partly because they want to benefit from the perks?', then I want to say No. I think communicators should serve their readership/audience rather than themselves. If someone is primarily interested in what wine can do for them rather than what they can do for wine, there's a danger they will not bother to pass on what they learn and experience.

2. Is it possible to fulfill one's desire for these experiences through the benefits mentioned above and avoid conflicts of interest and maintain journalistic integrity? Please provide a reason for your answer or some elaboration.

It's not easy. Wine people are naturally hospitable and generous, and it is in the nature of wine that it should be shared. I think some clear rules or guidelines area needed. See below.

3. Considering all the resources necessary to produce a wine publication (which relies on new content with every cycle), is it acceptable for the writers to accept free samples, trips, etc as (so long as one avoids conflicts of interest and maintains journalistic integrity)? Please provide a reason for your answer or some elaboration.

I think each form of 'perk' requires a different response.

Free samples are just a part of commercial life. I spend my time fending them off rather than soliciting them. A single bottle, or sometimes two sent by those concerned about the possibility of TCA taint, of a wine in commercial circulation in the hope of a review is hardly compromising. Six bottles of a mature gem would be. As are trips paid for by a wine producer.

4. Can a wine publication remain competitively priced and maintain a healthy revenue stream while paying for all samples and 100% of its reporters' trips and expenses? Please provide a reason for your answer or some elaboration.

You'll need a lot of figures and many a supposition to answer this question properly but I was always determined that JancisRobinson.com should never have ads or sponsorship, which is why part of it is available only on subscription. A 12-month membership has been £69/\$99 (including all of the Oxford Companion to Wine, all the maps of the World Atlas of Wine as well as all the articles and tasting notes) for the last four years.

Nowadays travel costs are not that prohibitive – even for those of us paying in puny British pounds. For some of us the problem is more finding the time for, rather than the cost of, visiting wine regions. But I think it would be an unnecessary expense to pay for every single bottle tasted – and in London we are lucky, as New Yorkers are, that there is such a lively calendar of opportunities to taste such a wide variety of wines at all price levels and from so many different origins. These tastings are usually very workmanlike affairs – max chance to taste max wines rather than any lushing up in terms of fancy food or locations.