

## Alder Yarrow

**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.**

Wine and food are pleasurable, and most people who begin careers to write about them do so because they're following their passion. Doubtless there are people who start "a career" in wine writing because they want free stuff, especially in an age when anyone can start a blog and pretend (or not) that they are a wine writer. But all that is beside the point. You're asking if the desire for free stuff is acceptable, and I don't think anyone is fit to judge someone else's desires.

**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.**

Conflicts of interest and journalistic integrity are subjective assessments that can only be made by the audience of the writer. Your conflict of interest may be the standard operating procedure for someone else. My notion of journalistic integrity might be the definition of asceticism for you. These things are not fundamental, objective truths. They are ethical gradients that everyone must define for themselves, while realizing that everyone else's definition may be different. At the end of the day the writer has to live with themselves, and their readers will care about the writers ethics, or they won't.

**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.**

See my answer to #2. To that I will underscore a point you already made: wine writing is a really lousy way to make a living. There are plenty of "mainstream" wine writers out there that would never be able to write as they do if they had to pay for everything they wrote about.

**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.**

Depends on whether you think The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal are: a) wine publications and b) competitively priced with healthy revenue streams. Those are the only two publications I know of that don't take samples and pay for every trip they take (though Eric Asimov is often invited to pretty exclusive tastings featuring wines that are served one someone else's dime). None of the "traditional" wine publications in existence that I know of operate without taking any samples. Just having a revenue stream, period, is hard in this day and age.

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While these sorts of questions are important to answer for oneself, and in conversation with one's own readers, trying to make judgements or set standards across the industry is an exercise in futility -- sort of like trying to make arguments about conflicts of interest in the mainstream news media in the US. Economics has produced a situation where because journalism is a for-profit endeavor, the system is rife with issues. As a journalist, you decide what your standards are, and then you decide whether you want to work for the NPRs of the world or the Fox News outlets of the world. And then the public does the same thing. If they give a rip about integrity and bias, they seek out those sources that they believe to be the least tainted, and if they don't, well then they'll watch or listen to or read anything.