

Distilled Knowledge: The Science Behind Drinking's Greatest Myths, Legends, and Unanswered Questions

Brian Hoefling

Abbeville Press (Oct 4, 2016)

Hardcover \$21.95 (208pp)

978-0-7892-1268-9

Reading this book will transform any ordinary barfly into the most knowledgeable and interesting person at the bar.

Clearly written and meticulously organized, *Distilled Knowledge* is packed with interesting facts about the science of making and consuming alcohol. It entertains as thoroughly as it educates, offering amusing details in a humorous voice.

The book is arranged so that it can be read straight through or, with its ample resource section, used as an easy reference. The chapters follow a logical sequence, starting with the process of fermenting and distilling spirits and moving through aging, preparing, and consuming them. The work ends with an explanation of metabolism and the effects that alcohol has on the body. There is also a brief and surprising review of alcohol consumption in nonhuman animals.

Hoefling does a fantastic job of synthesizing research into a resource that will be useful to anyone, from a novice to an expert. The book is full of answers to persistent concerns, such as the effect of aging alcohol in barrels versus bottles, the best way to cool a cocktail, why certain drinks are served in specifically shaped glasses, and the truth about hangovers and their cures.

While the information presented is fascinating, it is the author's sense of humor that makes the book exceptional. He writes that "plants produce capsaicinoids for the same reason they make many aromatic chemicals—to discourage certain animals from eating them. You can tell from the success of Frank's RedHot cayenne pepper sauce that the plant failed in this endeavor spectacularly."

Illustrations by Leander Castello clarify concepts that may be difficult to understand, and these perfectly match the tone of the book. They are simple, straightforward, and informative, with just a touch of humor.

Distilled Knowledge is first and foremost a book of science. It is well researched, and there is a great deal of chemistry and biology here, as well as frequent mention of scientific studies. What makes this book remarkable is that all of this scientific information is presented in a way that is not only easily understood but also highly enjoyable. Reading this book will transform any ordinary barfly into the most knowledgeable and interesting person at the bar.

CATHERINE THURESON (Winter 2017)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.