of alcohol today might be seen as leading to these conditions, not away from them). We find accounts of spirit-testing by placing some of the liquid in a spoon and holding it just over gunpowder: if there is a satisfactory blast, the spirits are strong enough. The inventions of saccharometers and hydrometers would later make such exciting tests unnecessary.

I would like to try some of the recipes for things that now would fall under the label “controlled substances,” such as the 1727 recipe for liquid laudanum, which actually sounds lovely: a quart of sack, ½ pt spirits of distilled wine, 4 oz. opium, sliced, 2 oz. saffron. Set all in the sun to mingle for twenty days, strain the liquid off, and bottle for immediate use (p.233). And did you know that the word punch for the delightfully spiked party beverage is actually a product of the British Raj? Punch, or panch, in Hindi means “five,” and there were always five ingredients to a proper colonial punch: wine, brandy, nutmeg, sugar, and lemon.

As Wilson’s book progresses towards the modern era, it loses some of its scholarly detail, and even the anecdotal information falls away just as my interest has been piqued for more current historical treatments. We do learn about the effects of world wars on drinking: World War I meant the beginning of controls on pub hours by the Defence of the Realm Act of 1914, and in the United States, Prohibition between the wars. We learn of teetotalling and the politics of morality, allowing us to consider that what had been seen as the water of life had now been transformed into the water of death in the imagination of Temperance. The decline of household manufacture represented a gender-switch in production, as the alewives who had had their own stillhouses and stillrooms yielded the manufacture to male-headed commercial establishments. We also find home use of many distilled beverages limited to “medicinal purposes” as “ladies’ aids”—apart from the fortified Port men would take as a post-prandial right.

Learning the roots of our current interest in single-malt scotch whiskeys (from the Irish word usquebaugh) will be useful for an intellectual toast—and, by the way, toasting seems to have come about from the practice of floating toast on the top of that punch. On American shores, the transported technique of distillation—and the British sugar industries created along with the slave trade in the Caribbean—led to some indigenous beverages, including Southern Comfort and, of course, bourbon. Also in the American South (which our author credits with the best American distilled drinks), the first drink to be called a “cocktail” was served, at Peyraud’s apothecary shop in New Orleans in the 1790s, so called as it was served in a coquetier, an egg cup.

What you cannot learn here in this fine book is intriguing. For example, why is it that spirits are called spirits? Is it because spirit can mean the essence of something, created in this case by reduction and distillation? I also find fault with an insufficiently detailed index: if we are to have one, let it be thoroughly done. In addition, I would have liked to see in a book purporting to tell the complete story of wine distilling and spirits something of their non-Western history and use. It is interesting to see a reference to ancient Egypt and to Chinese alchemy, but that is as far as it goes—the environments in which the lines are traced are almost exclusively European, with some North American and Caribbean references. Lacking the breadth that the depth would call for, the history of spirits from fire-bearing, man-made magic to medicine to pick-me-up to social beverages seems less satisfying. These flaws, in an otherwise most interesting work, do not detract from what there is: I just want more. On the rocks, if you please.

—Merry White, Boston University

The Way to Make Wine: How to Craft Superb Table Wines at Home
Sheridan Warrick
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006
xiv + 252 pp. $19.95 (paper)

My career in winemaking began when I chanced upon Judith Irwin’s Homemade Wine. After some successful (and a few disastrous) home winemaking efforts, I pursued a degree in viticulture and enology. Winemaking now pays the bills. Whether it inspires similar upheavals in the lives of its readers, Sheridan Warrick’s The Way to Make Wine will help anyone successfully make wine at home.

The key to Warrick’s book is its intuitive organization and thoroughly informative writing. Any guidebook should be read before starting the project and referred to as needed once the project is underway. Warrick grasps this perfectly. His prose is eminently readable, and the armchair vintner will find it difficult to put down. The text is brilliantly laid out so that the wine-stained vintner can find a critical section in a crisis.

In the first section Warrick devotes a chapter to each step in the winemaking process. The section “Making Even Better Wine” delves further into the techniques and shares strategies for obtaining quality winegrapes. This section includes analytical instruction and culminates in the chapter “Making the Wine You Wish You’d Made.”
Here Warrick describes advanced techniques, such as fining for heat stability. Warrick’s technical and scientific explanations are easy to understand, though he never oversimplifies or condescends to the reader. He also provides a comprehensive list of equipment and grape suppliers and analytical laboratories, as well as a bibliography and index.

Warrick’s account of the chemical analyses that can assist the winemaker are clear and useful. Before describing how to perform each analysis and where to buy the required tools and chemicals, he explains what the tests measure and why those measurements are important. Warrick also provides cost estimates and suggests alternatives, such as sending samples to commercial labs.

Unfortunately, Warrick does not sufficiently discuss the byproducts of the analyses. The Clinitest analysis for residual sugar generates copper in quantities that should not be rinsed down the drain. Paper chromatography, used to monitor the malolactic fermentation, also produces hazardous byproducts. The home winemaker should know that these chemicals are toxic and must be disposed of as hazardous waste.

Warrick’s decision to eschew discussion of non-grape wines is disappointing. After dismissing most fruit wines as “assertively sweet and…lack[ing] the subtle and complex flavors that make grape wines especially good…” he states that “fermenting other fruits requires techniques that are beyond the scope of this book” (p.8). Having happily made and enjoyed numerous (bone-dry) fruit wines, I cannot imagine what techniques Warrick has in mind. Most home winemakers will find making grape wines most satisfying. But grapes are available only once a year, and beginning home winemakers may lack the courage or confidence to spend real money to obtain quality grapes for their very first batch of wine. Fruit is available year round and, since frozen works as well for winemaking as fresh, the season is of no concern. Fruit wines can be made in small quantities at any time, and they afford the home winemaker the opportunity to practice and to become familiar with the winemaking process before committing to larger-scale winemaking with grapes.

Despite these quibbles, The Way to Make Wine is highly recommended to anyone eager to discover the thrills and delights of making wine at home.

—Matthew Reid, Calistoga, CA

International Politics of Genetically Modified Food: Diplomacy, Trade and Law
Edited by Robert Falkner
xiv + 265 pp. $74.95 (cloth)

Robert Falkner’s International Politics of Genetically Modified Food: Diplomacy, Trade and Law will not be read by as many people as recent food-related works by Michael Pollan or Barbara Kingsolver. But his interesting selection of twelve essays that “examine the political processes that operate at the national, regional and international level and investigate the role played by states, firms and civil society actors” (pp.5–6) should find an audience among those interested in the global politics of food. The political focus—comprising such diverse academic disciplines as international relations, comparative politics, trade policy, development studies, and international law—is a noteworthy contribution to the established literature on the global controversies surrounding genetically modified (gm) food. Rather than rehashing old arguments, the authors choose to illuminate sources of international friction and possibilities for international cooperation. Thus the volume represents a welcome counterpoint to books about the food choices we make as individuals.

Falkner and his colleagues describe how many of our food choices are structured by international agreements. Rather than seeing things in terms of an omnivore’s dilemma with unlimited (and unhealthy) food choices, Falkner presents an academic dilemma that explores the work done behind closed doors throughout the world, which helps to determine which foods make it to our farms, our ports, and our tables. That our choices are constrained by others, and that individual choices come from a menu decided on by others, may be a truism for many sociologists and political scientists, but it comes as a bit of a shock to many.

Following an introduction that briefly describes the relationship among biotechnology research, food production, agricultural trade, and the international politics of gm food, the book is organized into five parts. The three chapters comprising Part i review the creation of the international biosafety regime, known as the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the role played by states, non-state actors, normative factors, and politicoeconomic considerations. Both chapters in Part ii link the international gm food conflict to the globalization of the biotechnology industry, international trade, and the flow of food aid. The three chapters in Part iii focus on the transatlantic divide over the regulation and safety of genetically modified organisms, while Part iv's two