

James Suckling

James Suckling	
	
Suckling (left) in June 2011	
Born	James Cameron Suckling September 29, 1958 Los Angeles, California
Occupation	Wine critic, cigar critic
Language	English
Nationality	American
Alma mater	University of Utah University of Wisconsin
Spouse(s)	Catherine (divorced)
Children	Jack, Isabel
www.jamessuckling.com ^[1]	

James Suckling (born September 29, 1958) is an American wine and cigar critic and former Senior Editor and European Bureau Chief of *Wine Spectator* as well as European Editor of *Cigar Aficionado*. Suckling is internationally regarded as one of the world's most influential wine critics,^{[2][3][4][5][6][7][8][9]} and one of the most experienced critics of vintage cigars.^{[7][8][9]}

Biography

Born in Los Angeles, California, as an undergraduate Suckling studied political science and journalism at Utah State University. After graduating from Utah State University, Suckling studied journalism at the University of Wisconsin, Madison where he was hired in 1978 by a local paper as a crime news gofer. Having completed his course in journalism at the University of Wisconsin he moved to San Diego, and through the influence of his father began to be interested in the world of wine. At this time Suckling responded to an advertisement for a new contributor to *Wine Spectator*, then a local publication with only eight hundred subscribers.^[9] Suckling joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981, and after a large increase of subscribers, relocated with the magazine to San Francisco in 1982.^[10]

In 1983 Suckling began blind tasting Bordeaux with Alexis Lichine,^[10] and for the first time visited Europe in 1984, visiting various leading wineries in Italy.^[9] In 1985 he was assigned by *Wine Spectator* to establish their European bureau,^[11] living in Paris while reviewing all European wines, especially Bordeaux wine, Italian wine and Port wine for the publication.

Suckling moved to London in 1987 where he lived for eleven years before moving to Italy. In 1990, Suckling published his book titled *Vintage Port*.^[10] To date Suckling lives in Tuscany.^[9]

In press releases by *Wine Spectator* and *Cigar Aficionado* published in July 2010 it was unexpectedly announced that Suckling had retired from the publisher M. Shanken Communications magazines.^{[7][12][13][14]} Following some

public criticism to the apparent dispassionate manner of the Shanken announcement,^{[2][7]} Suckling himself described the departure from the company as "totally amicable" and stated he would go on to "pursue other projects",^[15] He later published on his own Twitter account that reports of his retirement had been "greatly exaggerated" and he was "planning an exciting future".^[15]

In September 2010, Suckling announced his charity wine project ahead of the Papal visit to the United Kingdom, named *One Wine One World*.^[16] The project, funded by art collector and philanthropist Nasser David Khalili, is aimed at bringing Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faiths closer together; the proceeds will go to the Maimonides Foundation, an interfaith charity.^[17] The wines, one red and one white, were created by blending grapes from California, Mexico, Hungary, Slovenia, Roussillon and Friuli, and were to be the only wines served at the Birmingham farewell dinner for Pope Benedict XVI. The wine's label is based on a multi-faith celebratory painting commissioned by Khalili from the British artist Ben Johnson with the forthcoming Olympic Games in mind.^[17] Suckling also announced that he had been signed by IMG Artists.^[17]

The website JamesSuckling.com was launched in October 2010 and Suckling stated it would mainly focus on video content featuring "key wine figures around the world". The content had been produced over several months in collaboration with film creator James Orr prior to the launch.^[16] In addition to Suckling's reviews, the site also features blogs by Mike D of the Beastie Boys, and Jessica Harnois, president of the Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers.^{[18][19]}

In June 2011, Suckling and IMG Artists founded Divino Tuscany, a food and wine tasting event designed to "bring together the top winemakers from Tuscany" and to "promote, share and demystify their top rated wines."^[20]

Suckling is the father of two children, Jack and Isabel Suckling, a choirgirl signed by record label Decca in 2010 at age 12, becoming the youngest classical recording artist to date.^{[21][22][23]}

Tasting style

During his time with *Wine Spectator*, Suckling tasted an average of 4000 wines annually,^[24] half of which were Italian wines.^[10] He tasted some of them on site at the relevant wineries and others he tasted blind in his Italy office.^[24] Responding to *Corriere della Sera* on how he "understood, judged, and recognised a fine wine", Suckling replied, "Usually you start from the nose, from the scents of the wine. But for me, this aspect is less important. I put more emphasis on what I taste in the mouth; I find the concentration of fruit, of the tannins, the alcohol and the acid. The most revealing element is the persistence of the taste in the mouth, the aftertaste. And another thing to bear in mind is that a wine is like a person, there isn't one which is the same as the next. It should be an emotion, not something scientific. Fine wine is harmony, the balance of all the characteristics which I look for."^[24]

In reply to the Italian magazine *Gentleman* on "what really makes a fine wine", he replied, "wine is like music" and therefore in the same way that most musical enjoyment comes not from knowledge of music but music's appeal to the emotions, wine too should be thought of emotionally by wine drinkers, not scientifically. He added that each and every good wine should be able "to move you" in some kind of way "like with music, literature and love".^[4]

Although Suckling is a noted supporter of Bordeaux wine, as illustrated by his blog response to a Bordeaux-critical article by Eric Asimov,^{[25][26]} he also has affinity for Italian wines, having stated that he feels Italian grape varieties



Suckling speaking at a wine seminar during the June 2011 *Divino Tuscany* event in Florence.

such as Sangiovese, Aglianico, and Nebbiolo are extremely unique.^[24] Conversely he has on occasion spoken dismissively of New World wines, applying the term "jam juice".^[11]

Film

In 2011, Suckling, in collaboration with James Orr, produced, presented and appeared in a 53 minute documentary, *Cigars: The Heart and Soul of Cuba*, in which he travels across Cuba, interviewing various well-known personalities in the region.^{[[27]][28]} Suckling comes to the conclusion that the high quality and success of Cuban tobacco can be attributed largely to the industriousness of the Cuban people and to their culture.^[1] The film premiered at the Havana Film Festival in December 2011.^[1]

Suckling, a friend of Maynard James Keenan of Tool, appeared in his 2010 film *Blood Into Wine*, a documentary focusing on Keenan's efforts to make wine in Arizona.^[29] Upon tasting Keenan's wine, Suckling's reaction is enthusiastic "though not sycophantic".^{[30][31]}

Suckling also featured in Jonathan Nossiter's 2004 film *Mondovino*, by some accounts in an unflattering light, as he was shown near a Pinocchio sign^[32] and seeming to state he has awarded a wine 90 points because it was produced by his landlord, the winemaker Salvatore Ferragamo.^{[33][1]}

References

- [1] <http://www.JamesSuckling.com/>
- [2] Arnold, Eric, *Forbes.com: The Booze Blog* (July 15, 2010). Do Wine Scores Matter? James Suckling's retirement from Wine Spectator will tell us for certain (<http://blogs.forbes.com/booze/2010/07/15/do-wine-scores-matter-james-sucklings-retirement-from-wine-spectator-will-tell-us-for-certain/>)
- [3] "Operazione Suckling", *Sommelier Toscana* N.11, pp 41-43
- [4] "Stappare un'emozione", *Gentleman magazine* N.108, pp 52-56
- [5] Comiskey, Patrick, *Los Angeles Times* (March 17, 2011). Wine journalist James Suckling swirls over to his own website (<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/mar/17/food/la-fo-james-suckling-20110317/>)
- [7] Lechmere, Adam, *Decanter.com* (July 15, 2010). Shock as Suckling leaves Wine Spectator (<http://www.decanter.com/news/news.php?id=300127>)
- [8] Strange, Hannah, *The Times* (October 8, 2009). Capitalist crunch hits Cuban cigar sales (http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_america/article6865227.ece)
- [9] *Firenze magazine* N.14, pp 198-200
- [10] *Wine Spectator* James Suckling profile (<http://www.winespectator.com/author/show/id/7>)
- [11] Steiman, Harvey, *Wine Spectator: Harvey Steiman At Large* (July 15, 2010). James Suckling —The Early Years (<http://www.winespectator.com/blogs/show/id/43214>)
- [12] *Wine Spectator* (July 14, 2010). Senior Editor James Suckling Retires from Wine Spectator (<http://www.winespectator.com/webfeature/show/id/43213>)
- [13] *Cigar Aficionado* (July 14, 2010). James Suckling, the European Editor of Cigar Aficionado, Retires (http://www.cigaraficionado.com/Cigar/CA_Features/CA_Feature_Basic_Template/0,2344,3213,00.html)
- [14] Lyons, Will, *Wall Street Journal* (July 15, 2010) James Suckling Retires from Wine Spectator (<http://blogs.wsj.com/wine/2010/07/15/james-suckling-retires-from-wine-spectator/>)
- [15] Lechmere, Adam, *Decanter.com* (July 15, 2010). Suckling: Spectator split was 'amicable' (<http://www.decanter.com/news/news.php?id=300137>)
- [16] Lechmere, Adam, *Decanter.com* (September 16, 2010). Benedict XVI, Decanter.com, Robinson: first to taste new Suckling wine (<http://www.decanter.com/news/wine-news/499900/benedict-xvi-decanter-com-robinson-first-to-taste-new-suckling-wine>)
- [17] Robinson, Jancis, *Suckling, the Pope and the future* (September 17, 2010)
- [18] Sean, Ryon, *HipHopDX* (February 16, 2011). Mike D of Beastie Boys Becomes Wine Critic (<http://www.hiphopdx.com/index/news/id.14100/title.mike-d-of-beastie-boys-becomes-wine-critic/>)
- [19] *JamesSuckling.com* Jessica's Blog: La Culture du Vin au Québec (<http://www.jamessuckling.com/jessicas-blog-la-culture-du-vin-au-quebec.htm>)
- [20] About Divino Tuscany, *Divino Tuscany Official Website* (<http://www.divinotuscany.com>)
- [21] Higgins, Kat, *Sky News Online* (September 14, 2010). Choirgirl Hits High Notes With Record Deal (http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/Showbiz-News/Choirgirl-Isabel-Suckling-12-Becomes-Youngest-Classical-Artist-To-Sign-Record-Deal-With-Decca/Article/201009215727615?lpos=Showbiz_News_Second_UK_News_Feature_Teaser_Region_0&lid=ARTICLE_15727615_Choirgirl_Isabel_Suckling_12,_Becomes_Youngest_Classical_Artist_To_Sign_Record_Deal_With_Decca)

-
- [22] *BBC News* (September 14, 2010). York choirgirl Isabel Suckling lands record deal (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-11294837>)
- [23] Lechmere, Adam, *Decanter.com* (November 26, 2010). Isabel Suckling: international wine trade 'follows' historic record deal (<http://www.decanter.com/news/wine-news/508350/isabel-suckling-international-wine-trade-follows-historic-record-deal>)
- [24] "Toscana regina di armonia", *Corriere della Sera*
- [25] Asimov, Eric, *The New York Times: The Pour* (May 18, 2010). Bordeaux Loses Prestige Among Younger Wine Lovers (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/19/dining/19pour.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all)
- [26] Suckling, James, *Wine Spectator: James Suckling Uncorked* (May 19, 2010). Get to Know Bordeaux (<http://www.winespectator.com/blogs/show/id/42712>)
- [29] [bloodintowine.com](http://www.bloodintowine.com) *Blood Into Wine* cast & crew (<http://www.bloodintowine.com/cast>)
- [30] Goodykoontz, Bill *The Arizona Republic* (February 25, 2010). 'Blood into Wine' (<http://www.azcentral.com/things/todo/movies/articles/2010/02/25/20100225blood0226.html>)
- [31] [imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) *Blood Into Wine* trailer (<http://www.imdb.com/video/imdb/vi1971717145/>)

External links

- James Suckling official site (<http://www.jamessuckling.com>)
-

Article Sources and Contributors

James Suckling *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=535092032> *Contributors:* Agnagara, Agne27, Chengels, Dust429, Franamax, Jay-Sebastos, McSly, Murgh, Nono64, Petie2911, Sharonidith, TYelliot, Tomas e, VAGenius, Waacstats, WikHead, Woohookitty, Yaneh, Δ, 22 anonymous edits

Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

File:JamesSucklingandIMGPresident.jpg *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:JamesSucklingandIMGPresident.jpg> *License:* Creative Commons Attribution 2.0
Contributors: FlickreviewR, Jay-Sebastos, Zhuyifei1999

File:JamesSucklingWineSeminarDT.jpg *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:JamesSucklingWineSeminarDT.jpg> *License:* Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 *Contributors:* James Suckling

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)
