



## WINE of the WEEK

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Posted by Fredric Koeppl under Cabernet sauvignon, California, Petit verdot, Wine of the Week

Randall Grahm, irrepressible owner and winemaker of Bonny Doon Vineyards, will have his way with us, won't he? Take his new wine, A Proper Claret 2012, bearing a California designation. Now Grahm hasn't made a cabernet sauvignon-based wine since 1985; he's a perennial critic of the full-blown, over-ripe, high alcohol fashion that prevails in many of the Golden State's wineries. In a sense, then, A Proper Claret 2012 functions as a rebuke to the high-flown cabernet style. ("Claret" is the historic term in the British Isles for the red wines of Bordeaux.) What would a proper claret be? From Bordeaux's Right Bank communes — think of Pomerol and St.-Emilion — it would be a blend of merlot and cabernet franc, with perhaps a dollop of cabernet sauvignon; from the Left Bank — Margaux, Pauillac, St.-Julien, St.-Estephe — it would be predominantly cabernet sauvignon and merlot with perhaps varying degrees of cabernet franc and petit verdot. What, then, Readers, is the blend of A Proper Claret 2012? First, we have 62 percent cabernet sauvignon, to which is added 22 percent petit verdot. What next? A quite improper 8 percent tannat, 7 percent syrah and 1 percent petite sirah. Every proper claret-loving English person is not amused. Grahm, however, is chuckling behind the scenes, well aware that the visual joke on the label gives the game away. The proper English gentleman depicted there, relaxing in his library, glass of wine and decanter at hand, wears, under his dressing gown, red fishnet stockings supported by a garter belt. The joke is on us.

There's nothing joky about the wine, though. A Proper Claret 2012 sports a radiant dark ruby-purple color with a violet rim; the bouquet is a melange of black cherries, raspberries and plums permeated by notes of briars, brambles and cedar, wood smoke, lavender and licorice, iron and iodine and a trace of blueberry tart. Plenty of ripe but not sweet black fruit flavors hang on a fairly rigorous yet approachable structure of soft but dense and slightly dusty tannins, dusty graphite minerality and

vibrant acidity, all seamlessly arrayed in fine balance. The wine is quite drinkable, even lovely, though it has a serious aspect too. The alcohol content is an eminently manageable 13.2 percent. Now through 2015. We happily drank this wine with Saturday night's pizza and guessed at a price at least \$10 more than it actually costs. Excellent. About \$16, a **Great Bargain**.



*This wine was a sample for review, as I am required to inform you by dictate of the Federal Trade Commission.*

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