



WEEKEND WINE NOTES: WILD RED BLENDS

Saturday, November 8, 2014

Posted by Fredric Koepfel

No holds are barred in California, unlike in the Old World, where government agencies determine where grapes can be grown and what grapes go into certain wines. Many wines, of course, are famous for their combinations of grapes, like Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape, which may contain any ratio of up to 13 grapes, red and white, or Bordeaux, where winemakers fashion cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc (primarily) into some of the world's most elegant, powerful and best-known red wines. No such customs or regulations abide in the Golden State, and today we look at five wines that offer some unusual blends of grapes, some more successfully than others. The trick is to create a blend that delivers distinctive, if not original, qualities rather than something that comes out smelling and tasting like a generic "red wine." *This wine was a sample for review.*

Bonny Doon Vineyards A Proper Claret 2013, California. 13.5% alc. Cabernet sauvignon 46%, merlot 17%, tannat 15%, petit verdot 13%, syrah 8%, petite sirah 1%, the point being that this is a very improper claret — Bordeaux red wine — indeed. Dark ruby-purple with a magenta rim; solid, tannic, fills the mouth with briars, brambles and underbrush but builds layers of cloves and allspice, cedar, ancho chili, then undertones of dusty black currants, raspberries and plums; no molly-coddle here, intense and concentrated, lip-smacking acidity; dense, chewy; needs a medium rare strip steak or a great joint of venison. Now through 2018 to 2020. Loads of personality. Very Good+. About \$16, a Real Bargain.

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