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## Living > Food & Wine

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### George Edwards:

George Edwards ABCs of Wine

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Needless to say, the headline refers to red counterparts to the creative white blends featured in the last week's column. Wines like Pedroncelli Winery's 2009 Sonoma County friends.red (\$12, 14.4per ent alcohol, screw cap), a mixture of Merlot, Zinfandel, Syrah and Sangiovese that cozies right up to the wife's chicken quesadilla with cilantro, black olives and sour cream. This one deserves another look.

Then there's Amber Hill Secret Blend California Red 2010 (\$11, 13.5), sporting a lovely touch of sweetness that rocked with French onion soup and a roast beef sandwich on the first night and earned a solid recommendation with a lightly spicy chicken enchilada the next.

These successes illustrate two fundamental truths in the food-and-wine pairing process: mildly spiced Mexican fare ranks among the most wine-friendly cuisines that we all embrace; and just off-dry imparts a textural compatibility that increases the odds of thumbs-up dramatically. Don't just focus on sweet. Do so in context, and the other dimension of wine is suddenly at your service.

By the way, the secret composition is printed in way small letters upside down on the back label, i.e. Zinfandel, Merlot, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Pinot Noir. Oh, and another by-the-way involves the just off-dry 2010 Amber Hill Secret White Blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Moscato (\$11, 13.5), a smashing hit with the daughter's (that'd be Allison) Chicken Adobo (soy sauce, rice vinegar,

brown sugar, garlic, bay leaves, etc.) and a zucchini and squash side.

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And what do you get when you season Sangiovese with a touch of Dolcetto and Lagrein? Why, none other than Lucca Vino Rosso di California (\$11.50, non-vintage, 13.0) from Buellton's Mosby Vintners, producer of a fascinating array of Italian and European varietals. This lively red proved to be a bright, tasty combo with SaveMart's deep-fried chicken thigh and even more delicious with the deep-fried breast, as well as last night's tamale pie. The following evening Lucca paired right up with a reheated pork chop and broccoli and mayo. By the way, this veggie has so far achieved a 73percent success rating with assorted white wines (66 labels), 100percent with dry roses (6 labels), and 80percent with assorted reds (37 labels). Just thought you'd like to know.

For a bolder and remarkably creative take on the red blend, let's turn to the Jeff Runquist 1448 Amador 2009 (\$16, 14.3, screw cap). Just how creative. you ask? How about 58 percent Petite Sirah, 16percent Barbera, 10percent Petite Verdot, 5percent Zinfandel, 3percent Carignan and 1percent each Souzao, Touriga and Cabernet Franc. The 1448 proved a rich, sweet combo with the aforementioned chicken thigh, almost too much with the breast but pulled it off, and got the same enthusiastic response with the tamale pie.

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Lastly, I have developed a fondness for the Grey Wolf Cellars Lone Wolf Paso Robles Red (\$16, 14.5). This "blend of four delicious varietals" (let you know when I get the varietal lowdown) created another bold combination with a yummy shredded potato and pork topped with a fried egg and cilantro concoction followed by a Snickers bar nibble. More notes to follow.

George Edwards is the owner and operator of WineMarket in Pacific Grove. E-mail him directly at [george@montereywinemarket.com](mailto:george@montereywinemarket.com) or visit his Web site at [www.montereywinemarket.com](http://www.montereywinemarket.com).

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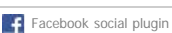
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