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Wine of the week: Raymond Vineyards 2009 R Collection Field Blend

By Colette and John Bancroft

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We seem to be on a blended wine kick of late, so why stop now? This week we turn to the red side of the ledger for a blend from well-respected California vintner Raymond Vineyards, whose big, juicy, boisterous St. Bernard puppy of a wine, the 2009 R Collection Field Blend (about $12 at wine shops and wine-savvy markets), is superb in every way.

The blend itself, a seven-varietal throwback to earlier California recipes, is astonishing and astonishingly delicious: cabernet sauvignon, zinfandel, petite syrah, syrah, merlot, cabernet franc and petit verdot! Each grape plays its part flawlessly to produce a truly mouth-watering table wine, full, rich and playful.

The winemaker cites raspberry and bing cherry on the nose, but we're going bigger and declaring the aroma to be unabashedly chocolate cherries. A lovely beginning! Then get ready for a wave of juicy, velvety, supple fruits on the tongue, most notably cherry, blackberry and strawberry, ably abetted by dark chocolate, a bit of black fig and a whiff of coffee. The finish is lush and lingering with delicate black pepper at the very end.

What to eat with it? Just about any robust meaty fare, from lamb to burgers to pan-seared ribeye steak finished with a simple reduction of red wine, pan juices and garlic to taste.

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