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WINE WEDNESDAY

Mysterious Wine Blends

BY RAY ISLE | POSTED NOVEMBER 28, 2012 AT 12:00PM EST



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It's easy, with wine, to drown in the details. Most of us want to know what grape a wine is made from—Cabernet Sauvignon, say—and where it's from. Knowing the vintage doesn't hurt either. And before buying a wine, people usually would just as soon have some idea of whether it's any good. But beyond that, there's a hyperabundance of information that is fascinating to the few (wine writers, for example) and mind-numbing for almost everyone else. Try saying "You know, it's kind of amazing, but the grapes for this Central Coast Syrah were grown on a combination of decomposed granite and sandy loam soils!" to someone you're on a first date with. You'll definitely be watching TV later, alone.

But how much do you really need to know? Here are a few good reds that simply leave out some of the information we usually expect, skipping the vintage, shrugging at origin, blowing off what grapes are inside. It's a rather devil-may-care approach, but that's kind of refreshing when it comes to wine.

Fess Parker Frontier Red Lot #122 (\$14) It's red, and if you turn the bottle around you'll find that it's a kitchen sink of varieties—Syrah, Grenache, Petite Sirah, Mourvedre, Cinsault, Carignane—but winemaker Blair Fox isn't telling what vintages went into the 122nd edition of this brambly, berry-rich Central Coast blend.

Alexandre Sirech Les Deux Terroirs Red (\$14) Not only does this earthy, structured blend of Merlot and Syrah from France not have a stated vintage, the label is even coy about where in France the grapes were grown. (Though I'd bet good money it's

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Bordeaux for the Merlot and the Rhône for the Syrah.)

Sherman & Hooker's Shebang Red! Cuvee IV (\$15) Early versions of this nonvintage Zinfandel-based red came in an old-school jug with a loop handle. Proprietor Morgan Twain-Peterson has abandoned that format, much to my dismay, but the wine is still impressive for the price: big, dark, spicy and delicious.

2010 Bonny Doon Contra (\$16) Bonny Doon's irrepressible proprietor Randall Grahm has made a career out of defying expectations, so the fact that he neglects to mention exactly which red grape varieties are in this bright, peppery "old-vine field blend" should come as no surprise. It's a great late-summer BBQ pour, no matter what.

2009 Frenchie Napoleon (\$30) What grapes are in it? Well, Cabernet, Syrah, Sangiovese, Zinfandel, Merlot and Cabernet Franc—though you'd never know that from the label. What is certain, though, is that this sleek, full-bodied California red has a rather ornate picture of a French bulldog posing as Napoleon on it, and \$1 from every bottle produced goes to the ASPCA.

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The Napoleon Red is delish!

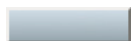
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Love the Fess Parker Frontier Red. Its rich and bolder without being overbearing. I tried it first at the tasting room which is such a beautiful place! If you get to Paso Robles or the area, its a must stop! Terri A. Shary, owner [www.WineSchwag.com](#)

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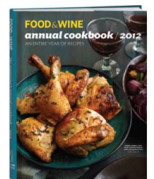
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