



‘Nontypical’ blends pair well with steak or barbecue

By Daniel Eddy

For FLORIDA TODAY

In the past few years, a wave of nontraditional red blends has flooded the market from California. We’re accustomed to Cabernet Sauvignon blends based on the Bordeaux model, including Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec.

We’re even used to the Ridge Vineyards style of “field blend” with Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and a host of other lesser-known grapes including Carignan, Mourvedre, Syrah, Barbera, Tempranillo and Grenache. Field blends refer to just that, a blend of the grapes in a certain field or vineyard, vinified together, rather than blended as finished wines.

So to take Zinfandel and blend it with Cabernet Sauvignon, we are entering new, uncharted territory — the territory of the nontypical.

One of my favorites is the Non Typical Red, made by Shedhorn Vineyards (\$20 per bottle), which harkens from Lake County, Calif. What makes it nontypical is the blending of Zinfandel and Petite Sirah with Cabernet Sauvignon (as well as Barbera and Syrah).

The wine has the jammy, ripe flavors we associate with Zinfandel, but with the pepper spice we perceive in Petite Sirah and the tannic structure and longevity of Cabernet Sauvignon.

I’ve had three vintages of the Non Typical Red, and all have been outstanding, showing the best of fruit bomb California. Yes, there is black currant and blackberry, but also cedar and spice box with just a hint of vanilla and toasty oak.

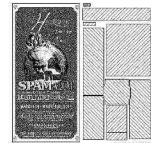
The Frenchie Red (\$24 per bottle), made by Jean-Charles Boisset of Napa’s Raymond Winery,

skews to Cabernet Sauvignon, but includes Zinfandel, Merlot, Petite Sirah and Syrah, giving this Napa/Sonoma blend plenty of soft fruit and elegant tannins without becoming wimpy.

Another Lake County blend that is excellent (and affordable at \$14) is the Cross Springs Red Blend, which is Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petite Verdot. Again, we have the ripe and jammy flavors we connect to Zinfandel, with a little more pepper spice from the Petite Sirah and the classic Syrah.

They are great wines to pair with grilled steaks or, even better, barbecue, since you have those sweet and spicy notes to play off, as well as smoke from the toasted oak.

Eddy is a wine consultant for ABC Fine Wines and Spirits.





The California wine world has expanded. FOR FLORIDA TODAY