



## Champagne can be a food wine, too

Bubbly is not just for toasting

By John McDonald - November 6, 2017

I received a nice email from David Koretz, CEO of Plum Wine, in response to my recent column. He felt I was too dismissive of his wine storage unit. To clarify, it is a fine product. I downplayed it because it is quite an expensive "toy." Since you folks send me quite a bit of email, I am aware a large majority of readers don't normally cellar or buy in the "wine over \$50" category. Those who do, or who love gadgets, or think "internet of things" is a necessary accoutrement for your wine enjoyment, may wish to consider a Plum wine dispenser. I see my job as education, recommendation and value shopping with a smattering of commentary and arcana. I am trying to widen your wine horizons to help you break out of the Chardonnay, Cabernet, White Zin, Pinot Grigio model many in the U.S. seem to follow. My primary reason is that while these products are often wonderful, the old saw teaches us, variety is the spice of life. Here's a question for you. How many types of wine grapes are there? You can find out by searching "winestyr.com how many wine grapes."

Check out the 88-point, \$15-\$16, North Coast California red blend The Culprit. This is a blend that shows the winemaker's art. The wines blended vary to provide a consistent profile. If you enjoy the product, you won't be disappointed due to vagaries in the weather. The 2014 blend: 32 percent Syrah, 28 percent Zinfandel, 13 percent Petite Sirah, 9 percent Sangiovese, 7 percent Grenache, 5 percent Barbera, 3 percent Cabernet Franc, 2 percent Primitivo and 1 percent Merlot. It must have been great fun for the winemaker locating these products and being able to conceive the finished product coming together to taste the same as last vintage. I think of this as the ultimate wine cheffing, the mystery basket of wine creation. A relatively new product, The Culprit has maintained an 88-point McD score since 2009.

For those thinking of a truly extraordinary holiday present for the person who has everything, check out [Raymond Vineyards' Winemaker for a Day](http://www.raymondvineyards.com/experience/winemaker-for-a-day). This costs \$125/person. Of course, you need to travel there and visit the wine region. Once you have created your blend, you can buy some. This is the schizzle, as my young folks tell me. Go to <http://www.raymondvineyards.com/experience/winemaker-for-a-day>.