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# Making Wine Outside the Box

## Winemaker André Mack's Uncommon Inspiration

BY MARIA C. HUNT | PHOTOGRAPHY GET FRAÎCHE CRU

If you look closely at the label of 'Love Drunk' Rosé; there's a little inscription that says, "When reality is better than ur dreams."

It might be a description of this frisky little Oregon wine by Mouton Noir that has the juicy flavor and intoxicating color to induce a giddy sort of pleasure akin to falling in love. Or it might be how winemaker and owner André Mack thinks about his life.

During his days as a sommelier with Thomas Keller's Per Se and French Laundry, Mack earned the nickname "mouton noir" – French for black sheep – because he always had a way of doing things that was a bit different from the corporate norm.

"It was always the running joke when we got bored at work, I'd say I'm going to make these wines and I'm going to call my label Mouton Noir," says Mack, 39, who lives in New York with his family. "It was a dream and something I always joked about and then through some crazy roundabout way it all seemed to come together."

As a winemaker, Mack is about making seriously good wines and having fun while doing it. Taking inspiration from the independent winemakers of Burgundy, hip-hop style and the beautiful fruit he sources from Oregon, Mack is making wine that matters.

Alain Ducasse's Adour in the St. Regis Hotel, New York, pours Mouton Noir wine, as do Bernard's Bar at the Elysian Hotel in Chicago and Rogue 24 in Washington, DC. Mack's Code Noir Merlot – a silky wine full of berries and hints of chocolate – is featured by the glass at the restaurant Michael Mina in San Francisco.

"Dre is one of the coolest people in the wine business," says Rajat Parr, sommelier for the Michael Mina restaurant group. "He has a special talent to finding wines that tell a story."

One of the best-known commercial wines in Mack's portfolio is O.P.P. In case



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you're wondering, O is for Other, P is for People and no temple scratchin' needed; the last P is simply Pinot.

Mack makes wine at a custom crush facility in McMinnville, Oregon and heard there was some good wine already in a barrel for sale.

"We bought barrels of wine from a winery down the street that went bankrupt and we referred to them as the 'other people's wine,'" says Mack. "When it came time to name it, we called it Other People's Pinot."

Some wine buyers are flustered when they see the label, but most get it.

"Well the label is very catchy, but aside from the label, the juice on the inside is crisp and clean," says Adam Linet, who sells Mouton Noir's O.P.P. at his wine shop Vino Fine Wine & Spirits in New York's Flatiron District. "It's a nice bridge between the highly extracted pinots America has and something Burgundian."

It's no accident that Mack's wines are both approachable and elegant like the best pinot noirs of Burgundy. He takes his winemaking inspiration from the independent winemakers of Burgundy who buy grapes and make their own individual wines.

"I take a lot of my cues from Burgundy," says Mack. "We're in the Willamette Valley region, one of the most respected in Oregon to produce wines that show individuality of the respective sites, to make a wine that's true to where it's from."

A military kid, Mack says moving every two years gave him the ability to be able to adapt to any social setting.

"I always felt like I was always in two worlds and now when I got to be in business and became a sommelier it was kind of more of the same thing," Mack says.

He puts his two worlds together most graphically in his line of Get Fraîche Cru T-shirts. Most feature puns and plays on pop culture that only a wine geek would love. Vinocidal Tendencies spoofs a punk band, Domaine Dujac is homage to the prized red Burgundy, while Run DRC mashes up the iconic rap group with Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, the world-famous estate in Burgundy.

"I just want to have fun," says Mack. "I don't have a family legacy or heritage in this business, so I can really be me."

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Visit [www.moutonnoirwines.net](http://www.moutonnoirwines.net) for a list of wines currently available and follow Mack on Twitter at @moutonnoirwines. Be sure to read our review of Mouton Noir's 2010 'Love Drunk' Rosé in Wines in Review.

Enjoy festive days and warm summer nights with 10 of our latest top wine selections from our experts.

## WHITES



**2010 Concannon Livermore Valley Reserve Assemblage Blanc (\$18.00)**

A total surprise. This new blend by Concannon (featuring the Bordeaux whites of sauvignon blanc and semillon) combines the crisp acidity of sauvignon blanc with the sultry viscous nature of semillon. The flavors are expectedly citrus, melon and peach.



**2010 Fetzer California Gewürztraminer (\$10.99)**

Fetzer Vineyards has built a legacy on being green and creating wines that are simply outstanding. This gewürztraminer is rich and complex with aromas of tangerine, mango and orange spice.



**2011 Kim Crawford Marlborough Unoaked Chardonnay (\$16.99)**

A beautiful example of a true chardonnay that's not overoaked. White peach, nectarine, citrus and green melon dominate the palate on this wine and are backed with hints of vanilla and nutmeg.



**2009 Seven Sisters Buketraube Odelia (\$13.99)**

A South African favorite that is light and full of flavor. This white wine is not too sweet and is a wonderful selection to end a delicious meal. Balanced with flavors of honey and fruit of apples and pears, it can be enjoyed any time of the day or night.

## REDS



**2007 Concannon Vineyard Livermore Valley Reserve Nina's Cuvée Petite Sirah (\$30.00)**

Petite sirah is first about color and Nina's Cuvée is no exception. Deep purple colors highlight this wine that gives off blackberry on the nose and full pepper, blackberry and black cherry on the palate.



**2010 Kim Crawford Marlborough Pinot Noir (\$18.99)**

Kim Crawford's pinot noir is a fresh, New World representation of this varietal. Rose, violet and strawberry notes are present on the nose and on the palate those are joined by cherry and cola flavors.



**2010 Quady Red Electra Madera (\$13.00)**

A sweet party wine for people who don't normally like wine, Red Electra's 5.5% alcohol is less than half that of traditional wine. The wine is unashamed about tasting typically "foxy" (grapelike) and the bright red color and light fizz make it a perfect drink for socializing.



**2010 Todd Taylor Napa Valley Alphawolf Cabernet Franc (\$40.00)**

Cabernet franc, one of the parent grapes of cabernet sauvignon, is typically used for blending but the 2010 vintage by Todd Taylor stands well on its own as a varietal wine. As with most cabernet francs, this one has the distinctive nose of violet and red fruit. The palate is surprisingly sturdy with blueberry, currant, plum and fall spices on the finish.



**2009 Wente Vineyards Livermore Valley Nth Degree Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60.00)**

A masterpiece of black cherry, chocolate, coffee and black currant, this dark-fruit heavy cabernet shows off the muscular nature of California-style cabernet sauvignon. The wine's flavors make it a meal in itself, but it also pairs well with lower acidity cow's milk cheeses (avoid the higher acidity of goat's milk cheeses) and, of course, beef.

## ROSÉ



**2010 Mouton Noir Oregon 'Love Drunk' Rosé (16.99)**

Despite the American style swagger in the name, this is a delightfully delicate dry rosé that whispers Provence from its pale salmon hue to the aromas and flavors of minerals, savory herbs and tart red fruit like currants, raspberries and strawberries. Close your eyes and you might be transported to the south of France — just for a moment.

**If you have a question about one of the wines featured as well as other wine selections or general questions, please email Greg B.C. Shaw at [info@vshereepublishing.com](mailto:info@vshereepublishing.com).**