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## 2013 Gallica Suzuri Red Wine Shake Ridge Ranch Amador County

by Meg Houston Maker

“Floral but meaty..”

In the Northern Rhône, in Côte-Rôtie, *vignerons* co-ferment red Syrah grapes with a tiny portion of white Viognier. This practice seems nonsensical, but it manifests a strange aromatic logic: elevate the earthiness of Syrah, that most feral of red grapes, with the floral perfume of Viognier, viticulture's demure ingénue.

When Côte-Rôtie is very young, or when the vintner's used too much of that dulcet white grape, the result feels awkward and gangling. Each grape's identity remains distinct and unblended. One says charcuterie, the other peaches, and nobody's talking, like a weird first date where she's ordered a steak and Cabernet and he's ordered the vegan special and water.

But when these wines succeed, and especially when they're well aged, the two profiles, wildly different, begin to converse. They elevate each other, and result is at once both more refined and more savage.

This wine is not Côte-Rôtie, but it is a vigorous New World nod to the style. It's Syrah-dominant, with the addition of Grenache and Mourvèdre, plus a soupçon of co-fermented Viognier. The Grenache adds levity (like the Viognier), while swarthy Mourvèdre sides with Syrah. Because it's still quite young, it likes some air for all of these characters to warm up to each other.

The result is both floral and meaty, evoking that curious commingling of cured game and stone fruit that is the hallmark of the Northern Rhône. The texture is sueded, only mildly astringent, while a hint of bitter herbs and coffee seeps in at the finish. Mostly it feels earthy, savory with its suggestions of purplish berries, brambles, and black plums, but decorated, too, with a flowery spray of peach blossoms.

Age it for three to five years (or more), or pair it now with charcuterie, lamb, duck, a smattering of nuts, aged cheese. Whenever you drink it, raise a toast to the French and to the art of conversation.

14.5% abv | \$50 (sample) | 250 cases made

