



Academie Culinary Wines

By jyadegaran

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Casey Cobb got the idea for his line of cooking wines after an experience in the grocery store several years ago. He wasn't a wine geek yet, and was shopping for a recipe that called for a "dry red wine." No one was able to help him, and even though he knew better than to buy a low quality cooking wine loaded with salt and preservatives, he was still at a loss.

Several loans (and many years of living off potatoes) later, Cobb launched Academie Culinary Wines, a line of four, half-bottle wines specifically blended for cooking. They retail for \$7.99.

Cobb, 28, sources wines from Napa, Sonoma, and Lodi and consults with professional chefs before blending at his Concord winery. He has developed wine blends and recipes ideal for red sauces, and meat, seafood, poultry, pork, game birds, fish and lamb dishes.

Each blend is intended to lend certain flavor elements, whether its refined sweetness (Blend #4) or depth and complexity (Blend #1).

According to Cobb's research, 40 percent of people that have to cook with a wine don't know what to use. It's strange to me that they would think a rancid or old wine in the fridge is OK to drink,

much less cook with, but it happens, he says.

I used Blend #4 to poach pears and created a sort of mulled wine, but I feel it was a waste. The recipe called for a full cup of sugar, which I wasn't willing to use. So I think I would've gotten a better understanding of the versatility of the wine if I'd used it to saute seafood in a pasta dish. That's what I recommend you do if you try it.

Still, I took a swig before cooking and the white wine – maybe a blend of viognier and muscat? – was of good quality with plenty of fruit and acidity. Like any quality brand in the value space, it was a pleasure to drink.

And I think that can be a challenge. As more and more people learn about wine, they'll be able to reach for a balanced bottle to cook with, just as they'd reach for one to drink.