

## **Grapes: Wacky Names For Wines**

*#54 in a series of opinionated articles about grapes and wine by John Smith*

As the perpetrator of the now infamous Slug Gulch Red and other wine names like (You Bet) Shiraz and O'Blivion, it's time for me to recognize others who have contributed to the increasingly wacky wine names of recent years. Thanks to the entry of wine into the mainstream and to the relaxation of stuffiness about its naming and labeling, a lot of very funny and creative people have begun to add humor to labels, with a combination of entertaining, punny or even silly titles. Since this is a family publication, we'll avoid the naughty and daring and focus just on the funnier ones. Many of the labels described here can be found on the web at Peter May's site, <http://www.winelabels.org/>. He has also recently written a book on the subject called *Marilyn Merlot and the Naked Grape*.

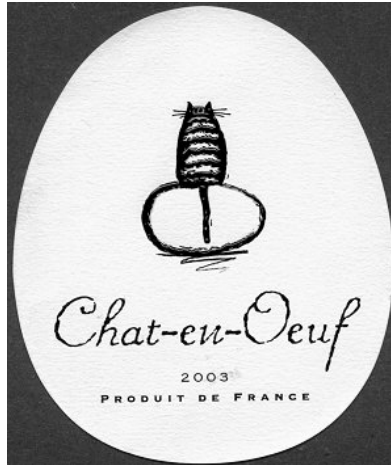
### **The Middle of America**

Almost everyone connected with wine got at least one email describing the (top five, top 10, or top 15) pretend wine list for the launch of a line of wines at Wal-Mart (they never really planned to sell wine). After combining and editing the ones I received, here is my favorite composite list:

Box O' Grapes  
Chateau Traileur Parc  
White Trashfindel  
Big Red Gulp  
Grape Expectations  
Domaine Wal-Mart "Merde du Pays"  
Sam's Dog 20/20  
Chef Boyardeaux  
Peanut Noir  
NASCARbernet  
Trucker's Choice  
Blue Light Special Nun  
Chateau des Moines  
Mogen Darryl  
I Can't Believe It's Not Vinegar!  
World Championship Wriesling  
Nasti Spumanti

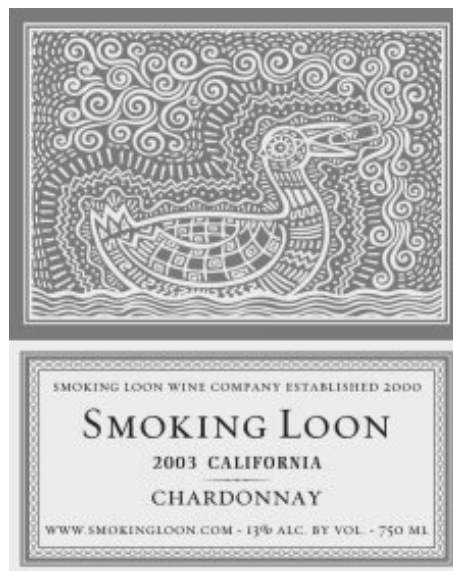
One critic added the tag line: "The beauty of Wal-Mart wine is that it can be served with either white meat (possum) or red meat (squirrel)"

### **Foreigners**



Many of the names are either language jokes, where a foreign word or phrase is paraphrased in English or phonetically repeated in different words, or just moderately bad puns. Examples from France's Rhone Valley are: The South African wine "Goats do Roam" (a corruption of "Cotes du Rhone"), "Goat Roti," poking fun at Cotes Roti (the roasted coast of France), and the label above ("Cat on Egg" for Chateauneuf du Pape). Los Olivos winery Andrew Murray got into the act with its own "Roasted Slope" Syrah, and there's Bonny Doon's "Old Telegram," after a famous Rhone Valley wine called Vieux Telegraphe. Sonoma's Luddite Vineyards (itself a pretty funny name) produced a wine called "Languid Duck" (France's Languedoc region). Other examples include "Bored Doe," the whimsical "Chateau Beaux-Eau" (that's pronounced "bozo"), and for a reverse twist, the Dry Creek winery named Duxoup, which wine snobs try to give a French pronunciation, but is actually from the owners' initial vintage experience, which was "as easy as duck soup." To cap it off, Italy has gone all the way with "The Full Montepulciano"

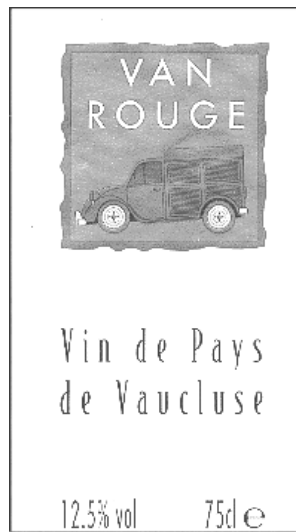
### The Animals



Animals have always figured prominently on wine labels (industry naming experts say that 18 percent of new labels feature an animal), but you can also make them funny. Don Sebastiani and Sons introduced “Smoking Loon,” which featured a picture of a waterfowl with a cigar (it is the successor to a very small batch of “Smoking Duck”). Adler Fels, a Sonoma Valley winery with a former low profile, brought out three new animal labels: Yellow Bird, Coyote Creek and Leaping Lizard Pinot Noir. From Australia, you can now get wines called Four Emus, Yellow Tail, Barrel Monkey (the Aussie term for the job we call “cellar rat”), The Laughing Magpie, Crocodile Chase and The Thirsty Lizard. Frog’s Leap, itself a takeoff on Stag’s Leap, corrupted Germany’s Liebfraumilch into “Liebfrögmilch,” and finally, Delheim in South Africa has a wine called “Spatzendreck,” which is delicately translated as “sparrow droppings.”

## Vehicles

We’re a vehicular society, but wineries and winemakers seem to develop unusual attachment to theirs, or at least feel the need to add them to labels. As the one-time owner of a grey van with the license plate “Van Gris,” I especially appreciate the one below:



Cline Cellars has Red Truck, not Joni Mitchell but California’s North Coast has “Big Yellow Taxi” (it’s a “cab,” get it?), Napa’s Tudal Family Winery has “Tractor Shed Red, Flat Bed Red and Rag Top Red.” Australia has “Ten Minutes by Tractor” and Los Gatos’ Burrell School Winery is proud to announce on the label of their “Cletrac Chardonnay” that it is grown and harvested using only vintage tractors made by Cletrac. California’s Happy Camper Winery features labels with a vintage Airstream camping trailer. While France’s “Red Bicyclette” might be the minimalist version; Don Sebastiani has a wine called “Used Automobile Parts,” a \$50 wine he has the courage to say “has firm tannins with silky edges bursting with heavily extracted plum fruit, huckleberries and dried currants, lightly spiced with exotic Tahitian vanilla, cinnamon and faint clove...also pairs well with wild game, elk loin with truffles and porcini mushrooms, venison rolled with

fresh rosemary, sage, and thyme, or pheasant stuffed with wild rice.” Could be the alternator, might be the coil.

### **Oh, the Puns!**

We will leave you with a category that defies description but causes many groans. Everyone by now has heard of the Charles Shaw wines marketed by Trader Joe’s and known everywhere as “two-buck Chuck,” but have you heard of Vinum Cellars’ “Chard-No-Way: Chenin Blanc? How about “Blasted Church” from Canada, “Mom’s Time Out” from New York State or “Ideal With Friends” from California? Then there’s “Plungerhead” from Sebastiani, “Suckfizzle” from Australia (named for Francois Rabelais’ infamous character the Great Lord Suckfizzle), and Bonny Doon’s “Bouteille Call” (the French word for bottle, pronounced “bootay”). Coopers Creek from New Zealand has combined both the feline and botanical aromas that Sauvignon Blanc is reputed to display in “Cat’s Phee on a Gooseberry Bush” and it replaced an earlier label that was missing the “h.” One of the more entertaining was the short-lived wine from Topolos named after the legendary Stu Pedasso (say it fast), from grapes grown in an imaginary vineyard in “Sonoma Beach.”

Zinfandel has its own list of names—it seems no one can resist a bad pun with the short name “zin” in it. From the original “Sin Zin” from Alexander Valley Vineyards, we have now “Cardinal Zin,” “7 Deadly Zins,” “The Adventures of Zinskey” (from Robert Sinskey), “XYZin,” “Zen of Zin” and “Inzinerator.”



The wine with the greatest notoriety (and highest prices) on eBay is Marilyn Merlot, with 19 different pictures of Norma Jean on every vintage, but one label we regretfully can’t print in this compilation is called “Cleavage Creek;” you’ll have to let your imagination be your guide.