

Three grand California red wines to go with that great burger



A well-made burger can be just as satisfying as a complicated dish fussed over for hours. And while a Coke or a Pepsi tasted terrific with your burger and fries when you were a kid, you might want to consider upgrading to red wine — and by that, I don't mean the equivalent of Two Buck Chuck.

Remember that scene from the 2004 film “Sideways” in which a despondent Miles (played by Paul Giamatti) runs home and gets his treasured bottle of 1961 Cheval Blanc and drinks it all alone at a burger joint from a plastic cup? That's not the way to go either. For a classic burger made with top-quality beef, you could drink a fabulous first growth. But why? What's needed is a red wine that delivers flavor and complexity, that's direct and true.

The same goes for the burger. Start with a great burger blend. The one at McCall's Meat & Fish in Los Feliz, which combines coarsely ground rib-eye with New York and chuck, is the best in town. Count on a half-pound per person, formed into a 1 1/2-inch-thick patty and seared in a scorching hot cast-iron pan for a few minutes on each side. I mix a little chile amarillo paste into a mayonnaise, add crisp lettuce, a slice of raw onion and tomato, maybe a slice of crisped bacon and even avocado à la Nancy's Burger. That's a recipe from Nancy Silverton that The Times ran several years ago, which outlines the plan for a perfect burger.

Here are three serious but affordable California reds that pair very well with that burger:

2013 Calera Pinot Noir Central Coast

The 2013 Calera, a great bargain for the quality, is made up of grapes from nine vineyards from Monterey to Santa Barbara. Tasting of bright cherries and dark plums, this Pinot Noir from Pinot pioneer Josh Jensen has an earthiness and clarity that makes it a perfect match with a burger.

