

# Or Haganuz French Blend Will Make Sukkot Meals Shimmer

By Michal Rosenberg | September 28, 2017



Or Haganuz French Blend wine.  
(Credit: Or Haganuz winery)

This time of year has a certain, special atmosphere. The rituals of the holidays bring families together and somehow all those preparations make finally sitting down to enjoy your meal all the sweeter. Those special Yom Tov meals are a good time to break out a noteworthy wine to pair with the exceptional meal you will no doubt be enjoying. One such wine I had the privilege of tasting recently is the Or Haganuz French Blend 2013. The wine is a blend of four varieties: cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot and petit verdot and is produced from the Mount Meron vineyards in the upper Galilee.

Or Haganuz is more than just a winery; it is a true communal effort. The winery is located within a small, religious community of the same name, similar to a kibbutz. The name, *or haganuz* (hidden light) comes from the Kabbalah, referring to the light of the first day of creation. The people of Or Haganuz live an observant, Orthodox Jewish

life based on the ideals of loving others as themselves, working together and realizing each person's potential. They spend much of their time studying Torah, but also make time to work in the various business ventures, like the winery, designed to sustain their way of life. The community is deeply committed to connecting the Torah and the land of Israel through their endeavors. For example, the plots of land that hold the vineyards get their names from the early Mishnaic period, which puts a meaningful spin on all the work involved caring for those vines.

The boutique winery was established in 2005 and currently produces 18 different wines. The high-quality vineyards combined with the exceptional terroir of the Meron region make for a range of delicious wines that truly capture the native landscape. Or Haganuz only produces single-vineyard wines because the winemakers believe each wine should have its own unique link to the vineyard in which it was grown. The wines are named for the plot where their grapes are grown, continuing that connection between the land, its history and the wine. The winery was awarded "Best Boutique Winery" in 2013, at the Mediterranean International Wine and Spirit Challenge.

The French Blend was conceived with the utmost care. Ofer Amit, head of international business development for Or Haganuz, explains, "The winery set out to produce a high-quality, premium, classic wine as a 'calling card' and show of its wine-making intentions, professionalism, capacity and capability." Unique conditions, combined with certain growing methods and low water allowed for the production of high-quality grapes, which were then selectively harvested and carefully supervised during fermentation. The wine was then aged for 20 months in French oak barrels to retain the fruit flavors. There are two versions out currently: the 2013, non-mevushal, and the 2014, mevushal—with a new, updated label. The French Blend 2014 earned a 90 rating from Wine Enthusiast, which noted that the "aromas of blackberry, fennel bulb and smoke set the scene for flavors of cherry, raspberry, chocolate and tobacco leaf. Mellow but ever-apparent tannins ply the palate alongside a strong bolt of acidity that tapers off into a pomegranate-imbued finish."

The result in your glass is an exceptionally complex wine with many layers of flavors to savor. Amit breaks down the components of the wine: "In this blend, each varietal plays a crucial role: cabernet sauvignon brings the structure, the backbone; cabernet franc brings the spiciness; petit verdot brings the tannins; merlot brings the softness and even velvetiness." When I was asked to taste this unique bordeaux blend, I knew I had to share the experience. The group of friends gathered at my house all agreed the wine was delicious. "Complex. It has a lot of underlying flavors," said one friend. "The initial impression is fruity but it's a full-bodied-tasting bordeaux," said another. The wine has a beautiful deep purplish-red color that is immediately inviting. The tannins are mellow, but apparent, and add to the velvety, balanced taste. This wine is suitable for all types of food, but pairs especially well with rich, savory meat dishes.

The French Blend is definitely on the higher end of the offerings from Or Haganuz, but it is a great bottle to take out for a special occasion, when you want to indulge and enjoy a wine above your usual selection. If you want to start a conversation at your table this Yom Tov, serve the Or Haganuz French Blend to your guests and let it light the way.

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