

## UA Innovation Day: Software can help you pick the right wine

*By Joe Pangburn  
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Trying a new wine can be daunting. What if it tastes terrible - not because it has turned bad but because you just don't like it? No matter how much it costs, it's a waste of money.

What if one who is not an oenophile could buy \$80 bottles of wine with the confidence that it will be superb. That's what four University of Arizona students showed off at the fifth annual Innovation Day March 25 to show off technology development and commercialization.

Alex La Croix, a senior in the McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship, created a software program he says allows anyone to "pick the right wine every time."

La Croix teamed up with other UA students Ganes McCulloch, John Ghorso and John Alvarez, to spend some serious time learning about wine.

The software is named SmartVine. It uses proprietary algorithms and wine rubrics to generate personalized and accurate wine recommendations based on factors such as food pairing, purchase history and preferred brand.

"People create personal profiles and customer specific information is stored and incorporated into the recommendation," said La Croix. "It recommends based on an acidity number, fruit number and personal preference of past purchases."

The program currently has kiosks set up inside Tucson-area Trader Joe's stores for customers to pick out wines. La Croix says he's also working on plans that will allow people to access the software online and by mobile phone.

"This way you can quickly type in what you are having and it will pair a wine for the meal that you are sure to enjoy," La Croix said.

This was just one of many innovations McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship students came up with for the day. Others included: a fire nozzle attachment that puts out fires 40 percent quicker by using 50 percent less water; a smart lens that focuses where you look through it without any moving parts; and a group is creating solar power plants to help smaller community electric coops reach the minimum required renewable energy standard. They currently have a field up near Patagonia.

Three awards were given away earlier in the day:

- **Technology Innovation Award:** Jay F. Nunamaker Jr., a professor who has developed a technology that has a variety of uses from keeping meetings on track to acting as a lie detector without ever touching the person.
- **Student Innovation Award:** Brian Miller for his work in gamma ray imaging which has led to the development of a gamma-ray microscope.
- **Lifetime Achievement Award:** Henry Koffler, the first UA alumni to become president. He led the UA from 1982 to 1989 and is credited with more than tripling funding for research from \$60 million to more than \$190 million during his tenure.

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