

The PICKS

FEATURE WINE

Hook & Ladder 2022 The Tillerman Red Blend

We got a few new wines this week from Hook & Ladder in Sonoma's Russian River Valley, so let's talk about the Hook & Ladder 2022 The Tillerman Red Blend. The owners and winemakers of Hook & Ladder are a firefighter and an anthropologist from San Francisco who bought a winery and proceeded to enroll in classes and learn how to make wine after the fact. A little backwards, don't you think? But they learned the ropes, bought more land in the Russian River Valley that grew into Hook & Ladder, and became some of the pioneers of Russian River Valley wines, helping to make it into the prestigious appellation that it is. This blend is all estate fruit from the even more prestigious Chalk Hill sub-appellation of the valley. It's primarily Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot, medium- to full-bodied "with notes of ripe wild berries, black cherry, and baking spices on the nose. Layered flavors of black currant and raspberry lead to a long finish of spice and dusty cocoa." Try this bottle for \$29.99, or try their Cabernet Sauvignon at the same price, or their big, bold Zinfandel for \$32.99. All good options for grilling... if the nice weather comes back.

WINE PICK

Copain 2024 Daybreak White Blend

The pick this week is a bargain we snagged, Copain 2024 Daybreak White Blend from Sonoma Valley. We've had a couple of Copain wines before, and they don't disappoint. Though owned by a larger wine house since 2016, they are still a small winery that takes good care of their grapes and are very committed to sustainability and social responsibility. Now, I will be honest and say this wine sounds a little crazy in its blend... I'm not sure there is a white grape that is not in it: Malvasia Bianca, Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Chenin Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay and Semillon. To quote a reviewer, "I am always impressed when a 100% varietal wine shines, but I am equally impressed by the art of blending grape varieties. Skilled winemakers know just how to combine grape varieties to fill in missing spaces, round out flavors and add complexity to a wine without losing the identity of each grape variety. Copain's winemaker, Ryan Zepaltas, demonstrates that skill with Daybreak." It also means this wine can go with pretty much anything. Green tea, honey, and passionfruit on the nose, with notes of pear, nectarine, and tropical guava on the palate. Not to mention this retails for \$25 on their site, and we have it at \$18.99. It's a no-brainer.