

# *The* PICKS

## FEATURE WINE

### Alexandria Nicole Cellars 2019 "A Squared" Cabernet Sauvignon

This is a big, bold Cabernet from Horse Heaven Hills in the very south of Washington. Well, 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Merlot, and 2% Cabernet Franc to be exact. Alexandria Nicole is a husband-and-wife team with exactly one vineyard that the owner/winemaker saw and decided he had to have. The estate sits atop a bluff overlooking the Columbia River where the soils are very unique and produce expressive grapes that are then aged in French oak. "In glass, the 2019 A Squared Cabernet Sauvignon offers explosive aromas of cassis, currant, red raspberry, and graphite with a subtle herbal complexity. A light touch of oak provides notes of cedar, espresso, and a hint of vanilla. The focused palate shows a silky tannin structure and cleansing acidity which provides balance to the richness and vast amount of blackberry, Bing cherry, and ripe strawberry which show throughout the wine. Try pairing with marinated ribeye or braised short ribs." The winemaker says it pairs best with laughter. Your choice, try it out for \$24.99.

## WINE PICK

### Benmar 2024 Idle Time White Blend

This blend from the Willamette Valley in Oregon, \$19.99, is truly a family affair. Winemaker Greg Bybee named the winery after his two children, Bennett and Marecca, and his wife Jen designs the labels. They source their grapes from small lots across the Willamette Valley, from "growers who share our respect for the land, the people who tend it, and the wines it produces," meaning they are all practicing organic, biodynamic, sustainable, or some combination thereof. Each wine is uniquely crafted and small production, so a blend like this made one year may not exist the next. You won't find much about this wine online for that very reason. Idle Time is a field blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Meunier, and Pinot Grigio... almost all of the Pinots. "Golden citrus, orchard pear, white peach, and crushed stone. A soft floral lift. The texture here -- layered, almost weightless -- with a gentle phenolic grip that keeps it serious. Fresh acidity carries everything to a long, saline finish." Now they suggest using this wine in a cocktail with soda water and elderflower or some ginger beer... but I like my wine to be wine. Don't let me influence your decision, though.