

The PICKS

FEATURE WINE

Bootleg 2019 Red Blend

A big California red, the Bootleg 2019 Prequel Red Blend, \$36.99. Known for their "exuberant, bold and complex blends that challenge convention," Bootleg is a small winery located in Paso Robles. As far as I know, they only make three wines: a Cabernet Sauvignon and two red blends. Their name invokes the rebel spirit of their winemaking forefathers who smuggled vine cuttings from France to plant in California. While smuggling is no longer involved (at least not that we know of), they give their winemaker, Gabriel Venezuela, no restrictions -- he can use whatever grapes from whichever appellation to create whatever blend he wants. Gabriel Venezuela... sounds like an alias to me, but hey, all in the Bootleg spirit. The Prequel consists of 80% Syrah and 20% Petite Sirah, a deep purple color with aromas of lavender, blueberry, and woodsmoke with notes of forest fruits, black pepper, and toasted oak. A substantial, supple wine that can stand on its own but also pairs beautifully with mushrooms or lamb.

WINE PICK

Trambusti 2023 Celsus Chianti

A fun little pick this week, Trambusti 2023 Celsus Chianti. This is a true, old-world Chianti, and you'll see why upon first glance. It is bottled in the traditional round bottle with the dried straw basket around it. All Chiantis used to be bottled like this, and you would know what the wine was the second you looked at it, but it's rare to see anymore. Trambusti is a family-owned winery in Tuscany that has been around since 1934, celebrating their 90th anniversary last year. Being a Chianti, the Celsus is of course 100% Sangiovese, a medium-bodied "classic Italian red wine with vibrant cherry, plum, and herbal aromas, balanced acidity, and firm tannins." It's young but oh so easy to drink. The perfect accompaniment for pizza and pasta, and it obviously makes a great gift or table centerpiece, too, and it won't break the bank at \$16.99.