

This tantalizingly light-bodied Zinfandel tastes like a Thanksgiving feast

In this Wine of the Week, critic Esther Mobley tries a Sonoma County "almost-red."

Food // Wine of the Week



Welcome to ***Wine of the Week***, a new series in which Chronicle wine critic Esther Mobley recommends a delicious bottle that you should be drinking right now. Last week, she [recommended a great, "entry-level" Sonoma Pinot Noir.](#)

Check back for a new installment every Wednesday.

I keep encountering wines lately that blur the line between red and pink, that seem too diaphanous to be safely called a red but a little too opaque to be obviously a rosé. It can be a tricky line for a wine to walk — to capture the freshness and brightness that the best rosés can convey without feeling anemic or overcome by green, vegetal notes.

A new, small project out of Sonoma County is an example of one of these almost-red wines done very well. Winemaker Kaitlin Childers' 2018 Sauveteur Rouge, released under her Camp Rose Cellars label, is a tantalizingly light blend of Alexander Valley Zinfandel, Carignan and Petite Sirah. By day, Childers works as chief of operations for [Sutro Wine Co.](#), an excellent Alexander Valley family estate whose owner, Alice Sutro, is responsible for the Sauveteur Rouge's label artwork.

The fruit comes from Stuhlmuller Vineyard, where Childers' husband Zac works as the winemaker, though Kaitlin Childers says she's solely responsible for the Sauveteur Rouge.

Generally, Zin from Alexander Valley is capable of producing deliciously deep, full-bodied red wines, and so Childers' decision to pick these grapes at a lower ripeness level, earlier in the season, resulted in a wine that felt unfamiliar to me — in a good way.

It's the color of a perfectly plump, mid-summer Bing cherry,

but the hue is translucent and delicate, which the wine's clear glass bottle accentuates. The flavors of the Sauveteur Rouge embody a Thanksgiving feast: It tastes like cranberry sauce, cinnamon, nutmeg and clove, and the tannins have just enough chalky texture to give the wine some food-friendly oomph. Whatever you do, please put it in the fridge; the wine is best with a heavy chill.



The style was inspired by the couple's time working in the cold-climate wine regions of New Zealand, Childers says, where she and Zac "really fell in love with the light-bodied, high-acid styles that are a winemaking necessity down there." While the grapes were fermenting, they received only occasional punchdowns — a process that mixes up the grape skins and seeds with the juice — in order to minimize the level

of color and tannin extraction, which is how they ended up with such a light wine.

Sauveteur is French for "lifesaver," and 5% of the wine's profits are donated to the [First Responders Children's Foundation](#), Childers says.

The wine is available [directly from the Camp Rose Cellars website](#), or at Cask (in both San Francisco and Berkeley) and by the glass at the Vault in San Francisco. Childers is also offering tasting appointments for small groups in the Healdsburg plaza, 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. Monday-Wednesday; contact her via her website for more details.

***Camp Rose Cellars Sauveteur Rouge Zinfandel
Alexander Valley 2018 (\$26, 13.9%)***

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