



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

CABERNET SAUVIGNON, SLD ESTATE, STAGS LEAP DISTRICT, NAPA VALLEY 2014



PARADISE LOST...

by Rob Sinskey

It should have been a glorious adventure; instead, it was ominous. The Sinskey clan, together again, embarked on a road trip this past August to deliver the youngest to an Oregon college. It was one of those trips you fantasize about... a Chevy Chase *Vacation* movie in real life, complete with an overloaded station wagon and a dysfunctional family. But instead of a comedy, it turned into a tragedy. It started with an aroma like a campfire, then a huge mushroom cloud of smoke could be seen wafting up behind the mountains. As we drove, the sky darkened and the smoky haze dropped to road level. It was like driving through an apocalyptic landscape. Patches of charred land met the road. Warning signs directed traffic away from the closed mountain roads. Helicopters and planes flew overhead. We kept driving, hoping it would improve. It didn't. Only when we arrived in Portland did the smoke subside and we could breathe easy again.

Our spirits lifted as we moved our daughter into her dorm room and tears were shed as we left. Then we had to drive back through the smoke on our return home. It lasted for what seemed like forever. I think I was experiencing PTSD.

That was August. Now it is November and I am heading back to the Bay Area after a series of wine shows on the Hawaiian Islands. I am about to return to my region covered with smoke from the most destructive and deadly fire in California history. It seems strange that, just one year after the wine country fires set the record for the most destructive and deadly fires in California history, we are now faced with an even bigger one that wiped the town of Paradise off the map and killed scores of people.

On the drive to the island airport, my Uber driver asked me questions about the fire and the President's comments that the cause was poor land management. I had to agree that land management is part of the problem but the issue is much larger and more complex. It was predicted more than 25 years ago that climate change would lead to extremes in weather and an increase in the quantity and intensity of California wild fires. We discussed how environmentalism should be consistent with conservative values, as protecting the environment is sound business. Currently Napa is seeing fewer tourists as the smoke scares guests away. Last year, the fires caused millions of dollars of damage to RSV properties, vines and grapes. The total damage for Napa and Sonoma is in the three billion dollar range. Left unchecked, climate change will lead to the acidification of the oceans and the bleaching and death of coral reefs - just one of the attractions that provide tourist dollars to Hawaii, as well as habitat for the small fish that feed the large fish that feed us. We need to look forward and embrace new technologies that will allow us to live the life we are used to while inflicting less damage to the planet. This will take real, visionary leadership to realize. Looking to past industrial glories will only secure our place on the endangered list.

The difference between historic climate and extinction events and the one we are now living through is that we are cognizant of the destruction we are inflicting on our planet and we have the tools to heal our ailing earth.... that is, if we have the will to embrace change to protect the environment.

Napa: October 12, 2017



The 2017 Wine Country fires reduced the 100+ year old house behind the winery to ash along with the SLD Estate Vineyard. Note the firefighting helicopter and plane in the distance. The smoke is from the Partrick fire raging in the distance.



Winegrowing Notes - Jeff Virnig, Winemaker

The CCOF certified 4.5 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon and .5 acres of Merlot estate vines struggled on the steep, rocky, terraced hillside behind the winery. Since there is very little water to spare on the east-side of the Silverado trail at the northern-edge of the Stags Leap District, the vines were practically dry farmed with little water for the growing season. This sun-driven hillside site had vine canopies during the growing season that resembled a parasol shape. This was to provide ample shade to protect the vines and fruit from the intense afternoon sun. The reason for the past tense is because the October 2017 fires swept through the hillside on the first night and destroyed the thirty year old vines. It will be replanted in the spring of 2019

Tasting Notes - Jeff Virnig, Winemaker and Phil Abram, GM

Perhaps it's the small size of the vineyard or that it is almost dry farmed with very low yields, but the SLD Estate Cabernet Sauvignon seems to show the most vintage variation of any other RSV wine... and that's a good thing. A great wine, when picked at optimal (not over) ripeness, should reflect the uniqueness of vintage and site.

The 2014 SLD Cabernet Sauvignon opens with a bouquet of violet, blackberry, plum, cassis, cigar box and forest floor suggests quintessential ripeness and typicality of both variety and place. The first sip unveils a fruit character that is fresh and bright, with well-rounded notes of cinnamon, clove, star anise and mocha. Its brilliant acidity and firm, focused tannins give the finish length and frame structure to evolve for the long-haul.

BREAK THE SHACKLES...

Meals with Cabernet Sauvignon can get stuffy. I find they lean toward steaks, roasts and rack of lamb. I am guilty of this too, which is why I'm trying to mix things up with the unexpected. If there is one wine that can handle the unexpected, it is the RSV SLD Estate Cabernet Sauvignon. It's light on its feet with brightness and acidity but still packed to the core with great structure and flavors that embrace brambly fruit, cassis and dried herbs.

Rather than serve a formal meal I'm opting for the fun of Raclette. Wines for Raclette usually lean towards white and light reds but when you add earthy mushrooms it starts to move towards Cabernet Sauvignon territory. Think of the best grilled cheese ever - freed from the shackles of bread. If you want to pump it up a bit, add some thinly sliced flank steak or sliced meats such as Bresaola or Lonza.

What's more, it's fun for everyone... including the cook..

Until the Next Wine....

Maria



RACLETTE

If you can't find Raclette cheese, Emmentaler or Appenzeller make a fine substitute. San Geronimo from Nicasio Valley Cheese Company in California is a nice New World styled Raclette cheese. Serves 6 to 8

1 pound wedge Raclette cheese	2 cup sautéed wild, exotic or tame mushrooms
24 marble-sized yellow potatoes, boiled until tender	Grainy Mustard
Extra virgin olive oil	Flaked sea salt
Cornichons and pickled pearl onions	1 baguette, sliced and lightly toasted

1. Remove any paper or plastic on the outside of the cheese. Place the cheese cut side down in a cast iron or long handled sauté pan. Let cheese come to room temperature.
2. Preheat the oven broiler.
3. Toss the potatoes lightly with olive oil and place in a serving dish. Arrange cornichons, onions, mushrooms, mustard and sea salt in serving bowls and place on a large heatproof board or platter. Serve bread in basket or plate.
4. Warm small serving plates and keep warm in the oven or wrapped in a clean thick kitchen towel.
5. Place the pan with the cheese under the broiler until it is melted and bubbling. Remove from oven and use a large bladed knife to gently scrape off melted surface of cheese. Remove the cheese to a warm plate and let guests garnish with cornichons and other toppings as they like.
6. Repeat until the melted surface is finished then place cheese under the broiler and repeat until the wedge is diminished.







FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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