



# ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

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POV, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2015





## ***Keep on Farming in the New World!***

We are suffering from a new syndrome - Environmental Anxiety. I thought being farmers would condition us to accept the uncontrollable nature of the weather. However, when you continue to see records fall - and not for the right reasons - it adds a new kind of stress.

This past February was the driest on record in California with no detectable rain for the entire month. What should have been a wet, chilly February was instead summer-like, with temperatures hitting the 80's. We even saw bud break in some Carneros vineyards and the fruit trees filled with blossoms. Weird! Over the past few years we have witnessed some of the warmest years on record and fire has become a season. We used to worry about rain during the fall harvest season. Now we worry about fire and smoke.

I am getting used to weird. The unexpected is expected and the new norm is abnormal. What is really weird is that science predicted these extreme weather events decades ago and we, as a population, paid little heed.

I grew up in a small, central-coast town during the tail end of the hippie era when young people descended on the California coast to "get back to nature" and learn how to farm and become self-sufficient. The oft quoted slogan was "think globally, act locally" - this ethos has stuck with me to this day.

RSV is concerned with what is happening beyond our geographic area but we can only control our own actions, farming and business practices. Thirty years ago, Winemaker Jeff Virnig adopted farming systems to sequester carbon and increase organic material in our soil long before we had ever heard of "Regenerative Farming Practices." We embraced these techniques because we thought it was the right thing to do. Not only could we reduce our impact on the planet, we felt we could make better wine using these advanced methods of Organic and Biodynamic practices. We also believed if there were healthy microbe populations in the soil we could create a more resilient vine that could access the nutrients it needed, when it needed them instead of relying on human inputs of chemicals and fertilizers.

But it goes beyond the farm.... the winery generates a majority of its energy through solar power and recycles production water to use in the culinary gardens. We do as much as we can to reduce our impact, but we are not perfect and we can't have a global impact on our own. I am guardedly optimistic as more and more vineyards and wineries adopt regenerative methods, but we need as many farmers as possible to accept these methods as normal practice. Wouldn't it be nice if our government would back and support regenerative practices with incentives that would allow regenerative agricultural food production to be competitive with commercial chemical farming in order to encourage conversion to practices that can lead to higher quality food, an improved environment and potentially reduce the impacts of climate change? Because fine wine... and food, shouldn't hurt your palate or the planet.

## *Winegrowing Notes*

The 2015 harvest season was the fourth year of drought. The cluster counts were above average with overall yields below average - which means each cluster was smaller than usual. These small, compact clusters of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes grown in RSV's organically farmed Carneros vineyards developed deep flavor and beautiful structure. The grapes were harvested at night, then de-stemmed and crushed before fermenting on native or feral yeast. Delicate cap irrigation and punch down was employed during fermentation before the wine was put to rest in French oak barrels (30% new) for almost two years. It was blended by taste, then bottled where it rested for another two to three years before release.

## *Tasting Notes*

Deep blackberry and blueberry fruit notes with fresh picked herbs, bramble and forest floor lead to an aromatic bouquet that is shy at first and opens with a swirl in the glass. The first sip explodes with flavor, revealing the intensity of optimally ripened fruit. The wine balances juicy red and black fruit like Santa Rosa plum, black cherry, black/blueberry, cassis and strawberry jam with baking spice nuances of star anise, cardamom and allspice and a touch of bay leaf and mocha. Tightly woven structure is balanced by mouth watering acidity and supple tannins that make it ideal for not just the the obvious grilled or roasted meats or rich, creamy cheese and charcuterie, but also poultry, pork, root vegetables and mushrooms. The wine encourages the adventurous to experiment with food and wine. (03/2020)



## D'EM BEANS

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Beans are my passion. One of my biggest joys last fall was picking, drying and shucking our cache of heirloom beans grown in RSV's Capa Vineyard and at the winery. The harvest was good to us and our final haul was around 40 pounds of shiny, fat, deep-red, white and speckled beans. Beans are one the biggest stars of winter cooking at the winery. As flavor magnets, they absorb the juices and the nuances of vegetables, herbs and meats added during cooking. They are an essential ingredient in traditional cooking across many cultures. In France, cassoulet was made in the dark of winter from dried beans and dried or cured meats. The beans took up the majority of the cooking vessel to which a piece of sausage, a bit of cured duck leg and perhaps a straggling root vegetable was added for flavor. The dish needed to be hearty to sustain the hardworking people like farmers and other labor intensive workers. The animal fats used to cook the beans added the calories needed to fuel the toil of hard work in cold temperatures.

This version of cassoulet turns to the nuance of sweet and earthy root vegetables for flavor. Duck fat can be used to make the cassoulet denser and mouth-filling but, if you'd like to lighten it up, extra virgin olive oil adds a nice richness without the heaviness of animal fat.

POV has a nice core of acidity running through its beautiful cherry fruit and enlivening texture. It's the perfect foil to this hearty cassoulet. POV is perfect to drink now or hold for a cooler day that begs for cassoulet.

Until the Next Wine... *Maria*



## ROOT VEGETABLE CASSOULET

*I've added root vegetables to this cassoulet along with a few mushrooms for added umami. Feel free to add vegetables or greens of your choosing. The heartier the better. Cut the baby root vegetables in half to extend their reach. If the turnips come with nice tops, wash well, cut them up and add them to the cassoulet. Serves 6 to 8*

4½ cups cooked borlotti beans aka cranberry, Recipe Follows  
Duck fat or extra virgin olive oil  
10 pearl onions  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 cup diced carrots or 12 baby carrots  
1 cup diced turnip or 9 baby turnips with greens washed and chopped

1 cup dice parsnip  
1 cup diced celery root  
6 medium shiitake mushrooms, cap only, thinly sliced  
3 large white mushrooms, cap only, thinly sliced  
¼ cup tomato puree  
Seasoned breadcrumbs, Recipe Follows

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Place the drained beans in a large bowl.
3. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the fat of your choice then add the pearl onions and brown. Season with salt and pepper. Add to beans in bowl.
4. Repeat with the carrots, turnips, parsnip and celery root cooking in batches until they are golden and seasoning as you go. Reduce the heat if the pan gets too hot and starts to burn.
5. Add the mushrooms and cook until the juices are almost dry. Add to the beans. If you have turnips greens cook them now in a little fat until wilted and add them to the bowl.
6. Add the tomato puree to the pan and stir until it bubbles. Add 1 cup of water to the pan, stir well and pour over the vegetables in the bowl.
7. Transfer the beans and vegetables to a large 4 quart baking dish - cassoulet pan or cazuela dish. Top with the bread crumbs.
8. Bake until the cassoulet is bubbling and the breadcrumbs are golden, about 1 hour. If the breadcrumbs brown too quickly cover lightly with a sheet of aluminum foil. DO not seal or the breadcrumbs will get soggy.



## BASIC BEAN RECIPE

*In addition to using this basic recipe for soups, dried beans can be cooked, drained and pureed with roasted garlic and olive oil for a wonderful spread for crusty bread. Yield: 4 to 5 cups*

2 cups dried beans  
6 to 8 cups water

Kosher salt

1. Place the beans in a large bowl and cover with water by 5 inches. Let them soak overnight. The following day drain the beans and place in a large pot. Fill it with cold water to cover the beans by two inches and bring to a boil. Turn off the heat and let the beans sit for 15 minutes. Drain the beans and add enough cold water to cover by 3 inches.

2. Bring the beans to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes, add 1 tablespoon salt to the beans and continue to simmer for another 30 minutes or more until the beans are tender.

3. Remove from the heat and cool. If you are going to save the beans for a few days store them in their cooking liquid. If you will use them immediately, drain them and add them to your favorite dish.

Note: Dried beans can take up to an hour or more to cook depending on the size, type and age of the beans. If the beans absorb all of the liquid before they are tender add more boiling liquid to the beans.

## SEASONED BREADCRUMBS

*Yield: 4 cups*

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
2 teaspoons minced shallot  
½ teaspoon minced rosemary

1 teaspoon chopped thyme  
4 cups fresh breadcrumbs, lightly toasted but still soft

1. Heat a medium sauté pan over medium heat. Add the olive oil and then the shallots and cook until the shallots are soft and starting to turn golden, about 2 minutes. Stir in the herbs.

2. Transfer to a medium bowl. Add the bread crumbs and mix well.





## FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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