



# ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

---

ABRAXAS, VIN DE TERROIR, SCINTILLA SONOMA VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS 2018





## *Is It Natty or Nurture?*

Fruit can ferment and become wine without human intervention. Just observe drunken birds and animals after they eat neglected fruit that has been fermenting on the vine or dropped on the ground. They get sauced and seem to be enjoying themselves - but was the wine good? If it was, it was by luck.

Humans have spent thousands of years actively pursuing the craft of fine winemaking with each improvement a result of some sort of intervention. Advancements in the vineyard include site selection, the improvement of the soil through composting or the grazing of animals, the choice of a rootstock, finding the ideal field selection or clone of a specific variety, analyzing climate to make sure the selections are appropriate for the environment, water management, deciding when to pick - and many more decisions that don't even address pest and weed control as well as conventional (read chemical) farming methods. However, since I think of organic farming as a baseline, I will ignore the latter.

Then there's winemaking. There have been huge improvements in winemaking in just the past 100 years with temperature controlled stainless steel fermenters, clean cellars, the study of native and cultivated yeast strains and small cask barrels. Then there is the dark side - a slew of less than natural remedial methods that alter the finished product of wine... and that has been the problem.

As the technology of wine became more precise, wine became more generic; even at the high end. Some people began to reject "perfect" wine for a wine that was different - not necessarily better, but with unique character... and the "Natural" or "Natty" wine movement was born.

I applaud the rejection of industrial wine for wines of character but I reject the celebration of severely flawed or overly funky wine in the same way that I reject over-priced wine that is manufactured to fit a targeted taste profile. The idea that a natural wine is only "natty" if it ignores the craft of winemaking and is made by a non-interventionist is a flawed concept. Every decision that is made in wine growing and winemaking is interventionist. No wine, that I am aware of, is made of foraged grapes from native vines. Humans interact with the natural process of turning grapes into wine from the beginning; from hybridized rootstocks derived from those that were once native to the US being shipped to Europe to save the French vines from phylloxera, to European vinifera planted all over the world as the identity of fine wine varieties, all the way through to choosing what vessel to ferment or age the wine in. Human intervention is the reason fine wine exists. The trick is to intervene using natural methods to make a well crafted wine of character that ultimately is delicious.

## ***Winegrowing Notes***

Abraxas is a dance with nature. It rejects science-based winemaking and instead embraces the craft of winegrowing. Four grapes - Riesling, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer - grow side by side on RSV's organically farmed Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard. Each variety is hand picked at night at each variety's peak expression, cool fermented separately and then blended to create a wine of character with stunning aromatics and mineral nerve. It is naturally delicious.

## ***Tasting Notes***

It is only natural that Abraxas is a standout wine from vintage to vintage. The Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer are organically farmed in the cool climate of RSV's Scintilla Sonoma vineyard, where RSV's flock of sheep graze the land and falcons patrol the vines. This wine shows brilliant, integrated complexity led by a floral bouquet of jasmine, honeysuckle and spring citrus blossom; followed by fruit flavors of green apple, D'anjou pear, fresh Meyer lemon and tangerine. Focused, riesling-driven minerality is one of the many layers of texture that offer a nod of respect to the great aromatic whites of France, Germany and Austria. It is a deliciously dry wine that is great with the classics - cheese, cassoulet, tarte flambée - but really shines with the foods of the world - Mexican, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Indian - in that it can handle spices and flavors that are usually in beer or saké territory... and it does it with a verve that is rare for a New World wine. *(Phil Abram and Rob Sinskey 12/2021)*





## TIME

---

I think about time with the turn of every new year. Time is the one thing I wish I had more of. My attempts to slow it, stop it, or turn it back are fruitless. Time is the ultimate leveler of the playing field. It can't be bought or sold.

The one thing we can control is how we choose to spend our time. That's one of the reasons I love this recipe. Once all the ingredients are in the pot, set your timer and forget about dinner for 1 ½ to 2 hours. That time is yours to pour a glass of wine, cross things off your list, train for a marathon or hang with friends and family.

I'm all about a glass of wine and relaxing in a big cozy chair while the smell of this aromatic curry wafts through the air. Abraxas is the perfect wine for the times and it is fantastic with this dish. The aromatics and heat from Thai curries are fabulous with a wine like Abraxas. Its stone fruit and lime aromas with hint of spice and fresh, mouthwatering finish make it a perfect match.

This curry can't stop time but enjoying a nice warm bowl with a glass of Abraxas can make its passing pure pleasure.

Until the Next Wine.... *Maria*

## THAI GREEN CURRY COCONUT SHORT RIBS

*This curry is cooked much longer than most because of the density of the short ribs. The longer cooking time allows the flavors to solidly marry and perfume the ingredients. The curry can be served with steamed Jasmine rice if desired, but the potatoes make it hearty enough to do without. You can substitute chicken thighs, firm tofu or lamb shanks, adjust cooking time accordingly. If for any reason you omit the fish sauce and shrimp paste, use additional salt to taste. Serves 6*

6 meaty beef short ribs	3 large kafir lime leaves, 2 julienned, 1 left whole
Expeller pressed vegetable oil	1 teaspoon kosher salt
Fish sauce	1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro leaves plus ½ cup for garnish	1 medium yellow onion, sliced into very thin wedges
2 tablespoons peeled and grated fresh ginger	3 tablespoons palm sugar or light brown sugar
2 tablespoons peeled and grated galangal root	2 cans full fat coconut milk
2 tablespoons roughly chopped fresh lemon grass, tender white part only	1 ½ pounds small yellow new potatoes, washed, cut in half or if larger quartered
1 teaspoon ground cumin seed	½ cup Thai basil leaves plus one large sprig
1 teaspoon ground coriander seed	½ cup mint leaves
1 teaspoon shrimp paste, optional	2 limes
4 large garlic cloves	Halved cherry tomatoes to garnish, optional
4 green serrano chili peppers, 3 coarsely chopped, 1 split lengthwise	Chopped unsalted dry roasted peanuts or cashews, optional
2 large shallots, peeled and coarsely chopped	

1. In a large bowl toss the short ribs with 1 tablespoon of oil and 2 tablespoons of fish sauce to coat evenly. Let marinate for 1 hour at room temperature or for up to 8 hours in the refrigerator. Remove 1 hour before cooking to bring up to room temperature.
2. For the curry paste, it's best to use a food processor. Add the 3 tablespoons cilantro leaves, 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil, ginger and galangal root, lemon grass, cumin, coriander, optional shrimp paste, garlic, 3 serrano peppers, 2 kaffir lime leaves, 1 teaspoon each of salt and pepper. Process until smooth and reserve until ready to use within the hour, otherwise refrigerate.
3. In a small nonstick pan heat the curry paste until it is fragrant and bubbling. Cool and add to the beef short ribs. Toss to coat evenly. Reserve.
4. Heat a Dutch oven or other deep covered pan over medium high heat, add 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil. Add the onions and cook until golden. Add the sugar and cook until sugar is caramelized and thickly bubbling. Add 3 tablespoons of fish sauce and reduce until juices are a thick syrup. Turn off heat and reserve.
5. Heat a large non-stick pan over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon oil and then the ribs. Sear the short ribs well until golden on all sides. Do not let the pan burn. If the heat is too high, reduce so the ribs evenly brown. Transfer with tongs to the onion pan. Add 1 can of coconut milk to the pan to deglaze and use a rubber spatula to scrape into the pan with the ribs and the onions. Be sure to get all the crispy bits on the bottom of the pan. They are full of flavor.
6. Add the second can of coconut milk to the ribs, as well as the reserved chili pepper and kaffir lime leaf and potatoes.
7. Add the large sprig of Thai basil and enough water to cover everything in the pot by an inch of liquid.
8. Bring the pot to a boil. Cover and place in the oven to braise for 1 ½ to 2 hours until the ribs meat is meltingly tender. Remove from the oven. Pull out basil sprig and kaffir leaf.
9. Squeeze 1 lime over the top. Stir well. Cut the second lime into 6 wedges to serve on the side.
10. Season to taste with additional fish sauce if the curry needs more salt. Fish sauce can also be served on the side so guests can adjust their own seasoning.
11. Spoon into bowls and top with coarsely torn cilantro, basil and mint leaves and tomatoes and nuts if desired.





## FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

---

Robert Sinskey Vineyards  
6320 Silverado Trail  
Napa, CA 94558  
707.944.9090  
robertsinskey.com

Winemaker: Jeff Virnig  
Chef: Maria Helm Sinskey  
Photos and Text: Rob Sinskey  
gluttons@robertsinskey.com

