



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

CABERNET FRANC, VANDAL VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2016





CFB - WTF!

I am a reluctant activist. Though it was never enough to just make and sell a product, all I ever wanted for RSV was to have a sense of purpose while we farmed and made a wine that spoke for itself. We needed to feel we were doing the “right” thing; that we stood for something; that we were conscientious of the potential damage modern farming does to the environment and that we would do everything possible to heal an ailing earth. What is frustrating is that the answers to climate change are within our grasp but we, as a farming community, are not embracing the change that could transition from being a contributor to becoming the solution for climate change. I need to be more vocal.

Today I received an email from the California Farm Bureau asking me to write our assemblywoman to protest the proposed bill that will ban the sale of all internal combustion engines and light duty vehicles by 2035. Their sensational call to action reads “SAVE OUR FARM VEHICLES.” They make it sound as though it will do irreparable harm to farmers to not be able to buy an ICE vehicle after 2035. All I can assume is that an oil lobbyist is behind this campaign and not a farmer that has lived through the past five years of record fires and record heat. Doing nothing will do irreparable harm to farmers and all life on this planet.

It was a coincidence that I received this email today when I just placed an order for an electric vehicle and have reservations in place for an electric truck and tractor. Even though we currently use biodiesel in our farm vehicles, I can’t wait to mothball our fleet of noisy, polluting, aging diesel trucks and tractors for emission free vehicles that can be charged by solar. Fossil fuel free wine is coming.

The cool Carneros region may become too warm and the weather too erratic for the delicate grapes of Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc if climate change continues to go unchecked... but that will be the least of our problems if farmers find keeping up with a rapidly changing climate beyond our ability to adapt.

Winegrowing Notes

Thirty five years ago, Rob Sinskey and Jeff Virnig decided to farm better grapes organically. The idea was to overcompensate for the damage done by conventional farming and encourage natural processes so a vine could access nutrients naturally and withstand extremes caused by climate change. The soil is better today than when we started, with higher organic content, better structure and healthier populations of mycorrhizae, microbes and earthworms. The soil percolates water while protecting topsoil and the vines are less vigorous in a healthy, balanced way for nutritionally sound grapes that require less in the cellar - purity from dirt to table.

Cabernet Franc, like Pinot Noir, prefers a long, cool growing season so it can develop delicious flavor at lower sugars for a balanced wine with lower alcohol and good acidity. Combine the cool region with RSV's organic/ biodynamic farming and minimalist winemaking and you have the ingredients for a superlative wine.

Tasting Notes

This wine is a Franc-purist's dream. The 2016 vintage expresses a typicity that is rare in a New World Cabernet Franc. RSV's Vandal Vineyard employs a "beyond organic" farming methodology that elevates the expression of terroir complimented by a meticulous cellar craftsmanship that allows the purity of the wine to shine.

This Cabernet Franc leads with a stunning, rich crimson color that opens into aromas of rose, bay leaf and sage. Fruit flavors are abundant and inviting. Fresh pomegranate, blackberry, currant and plum meet cranberry and raspberry preserves while hints of cinnamon, star anise, olive, black tea and mocha are laced around tightly woven tannins that elegantly builds with each sip with a structure that encourages many culinary options. The wine is ready to drink now but patience will be rewarded with evolving complexity over the next decade and beyond. (1/2022)
483 cases produced.





A GOOD SONG

I am forever in pursuit of a good song. Maybe I have synesthesia because I find music in certain food and wine combinations like RSV's Cabernet Franc and sweet or spicy peppers. They harmonize beautifully as if they were made for each other. The peppers pick up on the graphite and dried herb notes of the wine to make the combo sing. This is the type of song I seek.

Some people may assume the song might veer off key when you add the heat of spice to a dish, but I wanted to challenge the wine a bit by using a little spice in the form of chili pepper. A while back I tasted an organic fermented chili flake salt made by B & B Gardens Provisions - a very small family-owned company in Napa. They dry fermented chili paste left over from their hot sauce production and then mix the dried flakes with flaked salt. I knew at first taste that their chili salt was something special and it would make a great match for the Cabernet Franc. I had yet to dream up a recipe, but I really wanted to support their fledgling company by using their delicious salt.

And *voilà!* Here it is. These delicate crunchy croquettes slowly reveal the flavor of the fermented chili. By the time you're done with one croquette, the chili flavor will start to sing. The flavor won't overwhelm your palate but will sit perfectly between the sweet leeks and the earthy potatoes to add a *je ne sais quoi* that meets a sip of the Cabernet Franc head-on. What a joyful experience for your taste buds. My mouth is watering.

Until the Next Wine.... *Maria*

GOLDEN POTATO LEEK CROQUETTES WITH CHIVE CRÈME FRAÎCHE

The traditional breading ceremony of flour, egg and panko is skipped in this recipe. The croquettes are lightly rolled in panko and do not have to be heavily or evenly coated with breadcrumbs. That's what makes these croquettes so crunchy and light. Yield: 2½ dozen 3-inch x 1¼ inch croquettes

Kosher salt	2 ounces finely grated Parmesan
1 ½ pounds russet potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters	8 ounces grated gruyere
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	4 ounces crumbled feta
1 pound leeks, trimmed and washed, sliced thinly	1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
Fermented chili flake salt*	Freshly ground black pepper
8 ounces panko, divided	Expeller pressed vegetable oil for frying
2 large eggs, lightly beaten	1 cup crème fraîche mixed with 2 tablespoons finely chopped chives

1. Bring 3 quarts of water to a boil and add 2 teaspoons of kosher salt. Add the potatoes and reduce the heat to a simmer. Simmer until tender, about 12 minutes. Drain and cool to warm. Grate the potato with a coarse grater into a large bowl.
2. While the potatoes are cooking. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the olive oil and then the leeks. When the leeks have wilted add 2 teaspoons of chili salt and stir. Continue to cook until leeks are soft and sweet, and the pan is dry. Reserve in a small bowl until potatoes are cooked and grated.
3. Add the leeks to the potatoes and mix gently. Add 4 ounces of panko, the egg, cheeses, thyme a few grinds of black pepper and 1 teaspoon chili salt. Mix until evenly combined.
4. Place the remaining panko into a small bowl.
5. Use a 1 ounce scoop to scoop a rounded ball of the croquette mixture onto a parchment lined sheet pan. Using your hands, shape each ball into a 3 inch long 1¼ inch diameter log. Gently roll in the panko to coat evenly and place back on the sheet pan. Move the scooped balls of croquettes to make room.
6. At this point, the croquettes can be frozen on the sheet pan and then placed in a zip-lock bag to store for up to 3 months in the freezer. Fry directly from frozen.
7. If you are using the croquettes in the near term, place them in the refrigerator uncovered for 20 minutes to firm up. They can be made a day in advance and left in the refrigerator uncovered until ready to fry.
8. Ready a cake rack over a sheet pan or line a heatproof dish with paper towels to receive the fried croquettes. Heat 3-inches of vegetable oil in a medium pot. The oil should come up the sides of the pot no higher than halfway otherwise you risk having the oil boil over the sides when the croquettes are added.
9. Heat the oil to 350 degrees F. Use a thermometer to check or drop a small piece of croquette into the oil, if it sizzles rapidly, the oil is ready. Fry croquettes 6 at a time turning once until golden on all sides. If they brown too quickly reduce the heat. Cook all the way through. Break one in half to check if you're unsure. Carefully remove the croquettes from the oil with a slotted spoon and drain on the prepared landing spot.
10. Serve croquettes hot with the chive crème fraîche on the side to dip.

***Note: *If you can't find fermented chili flake salt, substitute ¼ teaspoon fermented hot sauce for every ½ teaspoon flaked salt used.**





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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