



ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS

CABERNET SAUVIGNON, SLD ESTATE, STAGS LEAP DISTRICT, NAPA VALLEY 2016



SLD
2016

HOPEFUL...

by Rob Sinskey

for a new beginning!

For the first time in years, I feel hopeful. I have been feeling more than a little despondent after the challenges of growing seasons that continue to break heat records and harvests interrupted three of the last four years by record fires. We realize that we are experiencing the predicted effects of climate change... and we aren't alone. Australia experienced record heat and fires, Siberia was on fire this past summer, record high temps were recorded throughout the world, glaciers and permafrost are melting, Venice activated a flood wall for the first time to combat rising seas and we are experiencing a record number of hurricanes. So why am I hopeful? Because the incoming administration made climate change a priority in their campaign and, I hope, will make it a major part of their administration.

There is and there will be a lot of misinformation regarding climate change. Some are baseless and some are based on partial truths, like the claim that poor forest management is the cause of California's extreme fire seasons. That is partially true, but forest management is not the cause of climate change. I was despondent because those chosen to lead were not acknowledging the science of climate change.

Twenty five years ago, I had the good fortune to attend a series of society dinners in San Francisco. I am usually uncomfortable at these types of events but Maria looked out for me by making sure I sat next to someone fun... it worked. From then on, I told Maria that I would only go to those parties if I could sit next to the same person every time. That person was intelligent, inclusive, well informed, able to discuss many topics, loved rock and roll and enjoyed a good glass of wine. She also had a twinkle in her eye and a genuine laugh. I knew nothing about her before we met, but she left an impression. Her name was Kamala Harris. I never imagined that she would achieve what she has, let alone someday becoming the Vice President of the United States, but the very fact that she did, gives me hope. Our politicians could be cartoon characters as far as I'm concerned. Their persona sculpted by the media, pundits or opposition ads. It is different when you actually know them. It allows you to cut through the chatter and see them as nuanced humans.

Why am I hopeful? Because she believes in science and takes climate change seriously... AND she will have the ear of the new decider-in-chief. She is a Californian who has experienced the fires first hand and knows the people who have been impacted. She understands that our natural resources, tourism and agriculture are an economic boon to the California economy. She also understands that the fires and climate change are like an unfair tax that not only burdens the victims but adds an "environmental tax" on everything from the cost of food to health care. Our winery has lost much since the 2017 fires that destroyed our SLD Estate Vineyard and other property. These fires forced us to abandon smoke-damaged grapes three of the past four years. That is the tax we are paying for a carbon-based economy that relies on fossil fuel, carbon belching concrete production and carbon releasing non-sustainable farming practices. If we think of these losses beyond ourselves, the economic



ramifications are huge... insurance industry losses, tourism, health (both physical and mental), and the monetary cost to fight these mega fires. If we don't tackle climate change, we and many others in the wine world won't be in business in the future and I expect the cost of food will skyrocket as shortages become the norm.

None of this needs to be. We have the technology and the knowledge to change things. Farming can be encouraged to shift to carbon sequestering practices using regenerative methodology. Concrete production, if it were a country, would be the 8th largest contributor of greenhouse gasses but new technologies exist that can actually turn it into a carbon negative industry by capturing carbon in its manufacture. We are also on the cusp of a personal transportation revolution that will soon make the internal combustion engine obsolete. All of these fledgling ideas could become the norm and actually solve problems if they just get a little supportive nudge from the powers that be.

We now have a reason to be hopeful and a real reason to celebrate. Raise a glass with me to the opportunities of the future and a better world for our children.

Winegrowing Notes

Guilt-free hedonism is the RSV mantra. We love to make classically inspired wines that don't hurt your palate or the planet. The SLD estate vineyard behind the winery is farmed organically using biodynamic principles. The steeply terraced vineyard is almost dry farmed with a year-round cover crop that employs regenerative practices that actually sequester carbon. The winery is solar powered and all production water is reclaimed using engineered wetlands.

The 2016 vintage was supposed to be an El Nino year, which should have meant a nice rainy season starting in late December. However, by March 31st, we had received only 11 inches of rain... just enough to fill our ponds with enough water for the season. An early bud break shortened the grazing season and the sheep were pulled a week early. Cluster counts were low with small berries of intense color, flavor and a crop size of only 1.2 tons to the acre. The Cabernet was picked on September 22nd - 13 days later than 2015 and 9 days later than 2014.

Tasting Notes

Note: The 2016 SLD Estate Cab marks the second to the last vintage before this wine disappears for a while. The vineyard was destroyed by the fires just after the 2017 harvest and there will be a gap of several years while we wait for the vines to mature and then for the wines to properly age before release.

Jeff Virnig - Sometimes I feel like New World Cabernet Sauvignon has been reduced to a series of sound bites: Jammy, oaky, silky... disjointed bits of disparate and vague descriptors that makes one think that they are all one trick ponies.

I recall Rob Sinskey mentioning that wine should take you on a journey. The 2016 RSV SLD delivers. It is the essence of interwoven complexity with an amazing cavalcade of aromatics like black fruits, chocolate, spice, bramble, forest floor, leather and tobacco. Joining the party are rich yet bright, mouth-filling flavors of boysenberry and black cherry. The wine is complex and integrated without being distracting... it is compelling. It has an Old World soul and New World precision. It is delicious and will be hard to resist drinking in the short term but will hold for many harvest moons to come. (11/2020)

545 (6x750ml) cases produced



A BREAK WITH TRADITION

The ability to be flexible and accept change is becoming more important than ever in life, and when putting together a dish to serve with wine. Many consider beef and lamb sole Cabernet Sauvignon territory. Chefs and home cooks alike pile on exotic mushrooms, red wine sauces and bone marrow to make dishes that are exceptionally rich; a nod to excess. I admit I've been guilty of these excesses in the past.

I decided now was the best time if ever to break with tradition and I went straight to China for inspiration. I found the siren call of Sichuan peppercorns to be irresistible. Most would say I'm nuts simply because Sichuan peppercorns are known for their mouth-numbing effect - a character considered blasphemous when drinking wine. I moved forward without fear. I knew those unusual looking peppercorns had enough haunting flavor to do RSV's Stags Leap Estate Cabernet proud. I was searching for the Chinese equivalent of the French *Je ne sais quoi* and I found it.

The flavor of this steak is glorious. I can't describe it but its flavors sing with the Cabernet. Try it, you'll see. It might be dumb luck but these days I'll take luck as it comes.

Until the Next Wine....

Maria



SICHUAN PEPPER STEAK

The marinade on this steak caramelizes beautifully as it cooks, forming a delicious spice-scented crust. Don't be concerned about the small amount of marinade. The flavors really pack a punch. Serves 4 to 6

2 tablespoons Shaoxing rice wine or dry sherry
2 teaspoons dark soy sauce*
1 ½ teaspoon ground Sichuan Peppercorn
¾ teaspoon Chinese five spice powder

1 large garlic clove, crushed and finely chopped
1 teaspoon brown sugar
2 pound flatiron steak, trimmed of fat and sinew
Kosher salt

1. Whisk together the rice wine, dark soy sauce, Sichuan peppercorn, five spice powder, garlic and sugar.
2. Pour into a non-reactive dish or zip lock bag large enough to accommodate the steak. Move and flip the steak so that it is evenly coated with the marinade. Marinate 4 hours to overnight turning once.
3. Heat the grill to medium high. Remove the steak from the marinade and season both sides with salt.
4. Grill for 7 minutes a side for medium rare. Let the steak rest on the cutting board for 15 minutes before slicing thinly across the grain of the meat. Serve over a rice cake with buttered bok choy.

*Dark soy sauce is available at most Asian markets and online. It is considered an essential item for a Chinese pantry. I recommend "Pearl River Bridge" brand as it is free of artificial flavor enhancers.

CRISPY SCALLION MUSHROOM RICE CAKES

This rice cake can be made as one large 9-inch rice cake or as smaller individual rice cakes. To make smaller rice cakes, use hands moistened with cold water to form the rice into small balls. Press to flatten and compact rice grains. Cook as you would a hamburger. Yield: 1 10-inch rice cake

1 pound thinly sliced white mushrooms
Expeller pressed vegetable oil
Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper
4 cups cooked sushi rice
1 cup thinly slice scallions, about 6 whole scallions

1. Heat a 10-inch non-stick sauté pan over high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of oil and then the mushrooms. Sauté until mushrooms are golden and juices are almost dry. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
 2. Transfer to a medium bowl and wipe the pan out with a damp cloth.
 3. Add the rice and scallions to the bowl and mix well until all of the ingredients are evenly combined.
 4. Place the pan back over medium high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of oil to the pan and then the rice mixture. Cook until the rice is golden and crusty on one side and sticks together like a cake, about 7 to 10 minutes. Reduce the heat if the pan smokes or the rice starts to burn on the edges before the whole side is golden.
 5. Flip the cake onto a flat plate then slide the cake back into the pan to brown and crisp the other side.
- Note:** If you have 2 of the same sized sauté pans, lightly oil the second pan and place over the pan with the rice cake. Use hot pads to flip the rice cake pan so the rice cakes falls into the new pan with the crispy side up.
6. Turn out onto a serving plate when both sides are golden brown.

BUTTERED BOK CHOY

Most people stir fry bok choy in vegetable oil over high heat. I love cooking it with butter as it brings out its delicate spiced cabbage notes. It's quite luxurious. Yield: Serves 4 to 6

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

Kosher salt

3 medium bok choy, cleaned and sliced into $\frac{1}{2}$ pieces, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ cups

1. Heat a large sauté pan over high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of butter.

2. When the butter starts to bubble and brown on the edges quickly add the bok choy.

Stir until the bok choy is wilted.

3. Add 2 tablespoons of water to the pan and cover to steam the bok choy briefly. Season with salt to taste. Add the remaining tablespoon of butter and toss to coat the bok choy.





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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