



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

LIBRATION, EARTH-MOON, L1, RED WINE, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2019





STORYTELLING...

by Rob Sinskey

over a bottle of red!

She's ninety-six years old and loves to tell a good story over a bottle of red wine. Her narrative evokes images of simpler times as the only child of a larger-than-life wildcat oilman father who dragged his nuclear family through dusty western towns in search of liquid gold. Time moved slowly as she rolled around the back seat of the rambling sedan, staring out the window and imagining a more glamorous life; one that resembled the Hollywood talkies that could be found playing in movie houses on every main street.

Her father worked with his hands and surrounded himself with hard working immigrants - mostly Italian - who didn't mind laboring in the oil fields all day only to return home to gather their garden crops and make a party out of cooking for family and friends, preserving their produce and sharing homemade wine made in crocks in the basements of their homes.

My mother's taste memory was indelibly stamped with the aromas and flavors of those times. Her red sauce spaghetti and meatballs, dusted with Parmesan cheese shaken from a green can was always my favorite dinner as a child. Every time she cooked the dish, her stories would become more colorful with each glass of red wine and she would always finish the story with a wistful recollection of how much she loved those homemade wines and how the wine in front of her was just a shadow of those hearty, rustic beverages.

As years flew by, I would proudly open our wine for her only to receive a measured response designed to not hurt my feelings. I would try to persuade her that the wines we make are better because of the care we take in growing and crafting the wines and that they are better with food. However, she is convinced the flavor of the homemade wines the old Italian immigrants would let her taste as a child is the flavor of a great wine. I don't think I will ever be able to change her mind and I don't have the heart to tell her that the flavor she remembers is a flaw known as volatile acidity or "VA"...as in, a touch of vinegar. So instead of fighting it, I just either get her a bottle of cheap Italian red or leave a bottle open for a while before serving. She's happy, I'm happy, and each glass of wine keeps the stories flowing.



Winegrowing Notes

Rain seems like a foreign concept these days but 2019 was the last year of decent rainfall in recent years. A full 27 inches of rain beat the seasonal Carneros average by 6 inches. A dry April allowed for an even bud break for a nice set of fruit. Then more rain in May set the stage for a great vintage. The moderately long growing season allowed for beautiful flavor development and fruit forward aromatics.

A lucky seven individually harvested and fermented vineyard blocks were selected from RSV's organically farmed Vandal, OSR and Three Amigos Vineyards for this cuvée of Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Native fermentation with gentle cap irrigation and small french barrel aging for two years in the cave created a delicious wine with an amazingly round, rich and long mouthfeel.

Tasting Notes

This 2019 iteration of Libration is absolutely delicious! Youthful, blackberry tinged freshness bursts from the bottle. Juicy, summer berries and cherries bound from the glass. The vibrant fruit is supported by alluring, food-friendly, culinary herb/floral overtones and notes of warm baking spice that reveal with a swirl in the glass. Texture is key and the mouthfeel on this one is in a realm that can only be described as elegant. The union of perfectly ripe fruit and supple tannins make this big bottle ready for immediate consumption with friends and comforting foods like charcuterie, grilled vegetables and meats, wood-fired mushroom pizza or spaghetti and meatballs.

SAUCE VS. GRAVY

The battle continues over whether to call tomato sauce a sauce or a gravy, particularly on the East Coast . The name gravy never made sense to me. In my family gravy was strictly limited to the delicious meat enhanced liquid gold that was poured over sliced meat or mashed potatoes. When I first heard the term gravy instead of sauce, I couldn't stop laughing. The person on the receiving end didn't think it was funny and a fight ensued. Not a battle of the fists, but of tradition. In the end, the line was clearly drawn with each of us on our own side; never to be swayed.

This is the simplest of tomato sauces paired with my favorite meatball recipe. Toss the sauce with your favorite pasta and you have a hearty family style meal. Both recipes can be easily scaled up to feed a crowd which is how I like to roll. A magnum of Libration Red makes everything roll even easier. It's the perfect wine for red sauce and meatballs. Libration's bright plum and dried herb aromas and flavors make it a seamless match.

Leftover sauce and tomatoes can be frozen for a later feast. Both get better as they sit. It allows the flavors to soak in. Maybe that's the gravy on top!

Until the Next Wine.... *Maria*



SIMPLE TOMATO SAUCE

A deliciously simple sauce. Used chopped or pureed tomatoes depending on what texture you prefer. If you would like to use fresh tomatoes from the garden substitute 8 cups of coarsely strained fresh tomato puree for the canned tomatoes and omit the water. To turn the recipe into a meat sauce, start with 1 pound of minced or ground meat – beef, pork or lamb and sauté in olive oil until browned, then proceed from step 1 from the garlic on. Yield: 6 cups

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	1 bay leaf, fresh or dried
4 large garlic cloves, peel, trim and smash	½ teaspoon fennel seed
Two 26.5 ounce can/box tomato, pureed or chopped	Salt
2 cups water	Freshly ground black pepper
2 teaspoons sugar (optional)	

1. Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a medium sauce pan.
2. Add the garlic cloves and sauté until golden.
3. Add the tomatoes, water, sugar, bay leaf and fennel seed.
4. Simmer for 1 hour to develop the flavor, adding more water if the sauce gets too thick. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

BEST EVER MEATBALLS

I always double this recipe and freeze the extra after simmering in tomato sauce. These meatballs are also delicious served on a good bun, toasted in the oven with melted mozzarella or a dusting of parmesan and some fresh basil. For a lighter meatball, substitute ground turkey for the beef and pork. Serves 4 to 6

1 cup dry breadcrumbs	¼ teaspoon ground fennel seed
½ cup whole milk	¼ teaspoon red chile flakes, optional
1 pound ground beef	1 tablespoon chopped flat leaf parsley
¼ pound ground pork	¼ cup shredded Parmesan
1 large egg, lightly beaten	2 teaspoons salt
2 large garlic cloves, peeled, trimmed and crushed	Freshly ground pepper
1 tablespoon minced shallot	Simple Tomato Sauce

1. In a small bowl, mix the breadcrumbs and the milk. Soak for 10 minutes then drain and press off any excess milk.
2. Place the meat in medium bowl and mix lightly. Reserve in the refrigerator.
3. In a large bowl mix together the soaked breadcrumbs, egg, garlic, shallot, fennel seed, red chile flakes (optional), parsley and Parmesan. Mix until they are evenly combined. Mixing the aromatics together before adding to the meat prevents the over mixing of the meat which can make the meatballs tough.
4. Add the aromatic mixture to the meat and sprinkle the salt evenly over the top of the meat. Grind a few turns of black pepper over the top. Quickly and gently mix with your hands or a wooden spoon to combine all the ingredients evenly.
5. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Ready a lipped half sheet pan drizzled with 2 tablespoons of olive oil for the meatballs.
6. Use a 1-ounce ice cream scoop to portion the meatballs into 16 mounds and place them on the sheet pan. Pick up each mound of meatball and quickly roll it into a ball. Put it back on the pan and repeat with the remaining meat.
7. Bake the meatballs for 15 minutes, roll them over and bake for another 15 minutes until cooked through. Simmer in tomato sauce for 45 minutes to finish.





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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