



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

MERLOT, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2016





RE-WILDING...

By Rob Sinskey

A farm story!

Farming is the organization of the natural world to serve humans. It is not nature. I have long said that RSV works with, not against, the rhythms of nature by farming with the use of animals, cover crops, hedgerows and habitat restoration for the benefit of wild animals, birds, insects... even fungi. We try to overcompensate for the damage we do when we impose our will on the natural world. If the past five years of drought, extreme heat, fires and now monsoon rains are any indication, we clearly haven't done enough. Nature needs our help.

The new year finds us with a new, old farm. It was in the same family for the past 50 years and though the prior owners showed a particular love of nature, some of the land has been overgrazed and compacted while other parts have been neglected and remain wild. To me, it is the perfect canvas to practice what we preach. Can we restore the farm in such a way that encourages wild, natural processes while still creating a superlative wine and other farm products? Can we truly partner with nature so we both can thrive?

Only time can answer these questions but we aim to find out. Our goal is to balance the farm with wild habitat so nature can be natural and do what it does best... create its own checks and balances. The farm is already home to the largest heron rookery in the region and, with the recent rains, we have seen an explosion of wildlife I have not seen in my almost four decades in Napa. I am more optimistic now than I have been in years. The journey is just beginning.

Winegrowing Notes

The “Right Bank of Napa” sits along a ridge that travels from the base of Mount Veeder into the Northern reaches of the Carneros region. If you follow the ridgeline, the Vandal Vineyard is at the “top” of the region and, as you head southeast, you meet the Capa Vineyard and the new “Wilding Farm” before moving further south to the OSR vineyard.

All of these organically farmed vineyards are in a region that we believe should be considered separate from the lower Carneros. The “Right Bank” varieties of Merlot and Cabernet Franc thrive in the upper Carneros micro-climate with its long growing season and red volcanic and clay loam soils. Some of our favorite wines of all time have come from grapes grown in this region.

Tasting Notes

A vibrant Merlot is hard to find. A bottle aged Merlot is also hard to find. Put them together and you’ve found a unicorn raised on an organic farm. The 2016 vintage of RSV’s organically farmed Merlot makes for a subtle, nuanced and soulful wine. A wallflower at first, it has initial hints of rose petal, lilac, sage and tart red/black berries. Patience is rewarded as the wine opens with rich, vibrant fruits of black cherry, red currant and black plum that ride a firm backbone of black tea, bay leaf and graphite. A lingering mouth-watering finish leaves a distinct old world impression that suggests rustic, hearty fare and a table full of friends. (02/2023)

490 (12x750ml) cases produced





SO MISUNDERSTOOD

Oh Merlot! So maligned and misunderstood. It's a shame because a well-made merlot is magnificent on its own and it makes a spectacular companion to a nice meal. Merlot is a thin-skinned grape that's sensitive to manipulation and over-processing. It has nuanced aromas and flavors that can be drowned out by careless or heavy handed winemaking. Careful attention in the vineyard and the cellar is what makes RSV's Merlot vibrant and distinctive. Optimum ripeness at harvest lends beautiful notes of dried herb and capsicum balanced by dark sour cherry and plum fruit. Silky tannins and just enough fine French oak provide a beautiful structure on which to overlay the classic flavors and aromas of RSV's Merlot.

This lasagna is not a shy dish. It is packed with umami richness that, when paired with this bright merlot, pops and lifts your palate with each luscious bite. The way a good wine should.

Until the next good wine.... *Maria*

GOLDEN CRUSTED BAKED LASAGNA

This golden crusted lasagna is creamy, cheesy and packed with flavor. Use a 12 inch cast iron skillet if you plan to feed a crowd. You can also halve all recipes to make a 10-inch cast iron skillet or deep 9 x 13 ½ inch lasagna pan. Omit the turkey for a vegetarian version. Stir 3 cups finely-chopped, cooked spinach into the béchamel sauce for a nice addition, especially with the vegetarian version. Serves 10-12

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

1 Recipe Ragu, recipe follows

1 Recipe Béchamel Sauce, recipe follows

1 package Egg Lasagna squares or 1 box No cook lasagna noodles

8 ounces Italian Taleggio or Fontina cheese grated or diced depending on softness. Reserve ½ cup of cheese to sprinkle on top
2 tablespoons chopped flat leaf parsley for garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly oil the baking dish.

2. To assemble the pasta layer as follows. Note: Use 50/50 ragu and béchamel on all layers except the top. Ladle ragu first and bechamel on top then swirl lightly with back of ladle.

Ragu/Bechamel
Pasta in a single layer
Ragu/Bechamel
Cheese
Pasta in a single layer
Ragu/Bechamel
Cheese
Pasta in a single layer
Ragu/Bechamel
Cheese
Pasta in a single layer
Bechamel

3. Cover pan tightly with foil and bake for 45 minutes. Remove foil and sprinkle with the ½ cup of reserved cheese. Keep pan uncovered. Increase the oven temperature to 400 degrees F and bake until golden and bubbling 20-30 minutes more.



MEAT AND MUSHROOM RAGU

This ragu is packed with flavor. The turkey will be barely missed if you choose to omit it due to the large amount of umami packed mushrooms. Beef, ground pork and/or veal can easily be substituted for the turkey if you prefer a richer ragu. Yield: 4 quarts

Extra Virgin Olive Oil	2 cups dry red wine
1 medium yellow onion, finely diced	2 dried or fresh bay leaves
2 large stalks celery, finely diced	2 cups tomato puree plus 2 cups water
2 large carrots, peeled and finely diced	Kosher salt
2 lbs. ground turkey	Freshly ground black pepper
1 ½ pounds chopped white mushrooms	

1. Heat a large 5 quart sauce pan over medium heat. Add 3 tablespoons of olive oil and then the onion, carrot and celery. Stir well and cook for 8 to 10 minutes until vegetables are soft and caramelized. Reduce heat if the vegetables brown too quickly. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

2. Increase the heat to medium high and add turkey to the pan. Let the meat cook a little and then break into small chunks, season with salt and pepper.

3. Add the mushrooms to the pan. Cook for 5 minutes until juice exudes and starts to reduce. Stir in well to the meat and vegetables and season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Add the wine and bay leaves to the pan. Bring to a boil, turn down heat to a slow boil and cook for 5 minutes until the wine is reduced by half.

5. Add the tomato puree and water to the sauté pan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 30 minutes until the ragu has reduced to sauce like consistency. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm in the pan over very low heat for up to 30 minutes until ready to prepare the lasagna.

BECHAMEL SAUCE

This is a simple béchamel sauce that can be used as a jumping off point for delicious mac and cheese and leafy vegetable gratins. Yield: 1¾ quarts

6 tablespoons unsalted butter	Kosher salt
½ cup all-purpose flour	Freshly ground black pepper
6 cups whole milk	

1. Melt the butter in a medium saucepan. Stir in the flour with a wooden spoon until the butter and the flour are thoroughly combined. Continue to cook the mixture over medium heat for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat.

2. Whisk in the milk 1 cup at a time. Whisk until the paste is smooth than add another cup of milk and repeat the process until the milk is finished. The milk and flour should be smooth and slightly thickened.

3. Place the pan back over medium heat. Bring the sauce to a boil while whisking constantly. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 10 minutes stirring every 5 minutes with a wooden spoon. The sauce may form a crust on the bottom so try not to disturb it with the wooden spoon or you will have brown flecks in your sauce. To avoid this, you can transfer the sauce to a double boiler and continue to cook it for 20 minutes without having to stir. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover to keep warm for up to 30 minutes to prepare lasagna.



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

