



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

PINOT NOIR, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2018



EMBRACING MUTUALISM...

by Rob Sinskey

interconnected nature!

Climate change whiplash is upon us. We have gone from record heat over the past few years (with a 1200 year drought) to a winter with all-time record-setting precipitation and snowpack. Farming is difficult enough without all these extremes, but how do we respond when change occurs too quickly for nature to adapt?

Most farmers impose their will on nature. They are individualists who believe they can organize nature to serve their purpose. This approach might realize short-term profitability, but at what cost to the long-term health of the farm and the surrounding environment? At what point does “efficient” conventional farming have diminishing returns as nature - through climate change pestilence and disease - fights back to try to find balance?

We, as farmers, have a responsibility to look at the big picture and approach farming as mutualists instead of individualists. We need to recognize that nature has a grand design and we need to humble ourselves as we learn where we fit in. We need to be honest and self-aware, and ask what practices we can change to heal the damage we’ve caused to nature by ignoring natural processes.

Instead of posing rhetorical questions and lecturing from a soapbox, the following photos will illustrate the difference between a conventional farm and our holistic, biodiverse farm. All farm photos were taken on the same day; Wednesday, March 8, 2023.



These images are not of RSV’s vineyards. Though they look pretty, they tell a sobering story of imbalance. There is standing water on all of these vineyards. The soil has been compacted by the overuse of tractors and both mechanical and chemical tillage. Evidence of the use of glyphosate herbicide (a known carcinogen that has been linked to other health problems as well) can be seen in the bare vine rows. The steep hillside sheets water and carries with it topsoil and chemical residue into the pond. The pond has no habitat around it. The last picture shows the water running off the hillside and our dense hedgerow that separates the farms. These farms only serve the owners’ needs. They are ignoring the long-term consequences of neglecting the balance of nature above and below the ground, as there is little habitat for other species and the soil is compacted while shedding water and topsoil. The life-giving mycorrhiza and microorganisms die off and the land loses its ability to sequester carbon, instead releasing it to further exacerbate climate change. The deal with nature is broken.



Mutualism at work. These photos of RSV's Capa Vineyard show a living, regenerative farm with life above and under the ground. Cover crops are nurtured to encourage carbon sequestration, sheep graze the cover crop and not only provide nutrition but also help to avoid the compaction that tractors and chemical tillage would cause if used in their place. The soil absorbs water and has a healthy microbiome with a network of mycorrhiza that take the nutrients from the soil to feed the vines. There is no standing or running water on this farm even though it had just experienced record rain. Trees remain on the periphery and hedgerows of indigenous plants separate RSV's vineyard from the neighbors to help mitigate overspray from their farms and to provide habitat for insects, birds, animals and reptiles.

Winegrowing Notes

A “decade” wine... The 1988, 1998, 2008 & 2018 are vintages to love. Cherish the 1988 vintage of Pinot Noir for its bright structure and acidity. Love the unique 1998, a controversial ugly duckling that evolved into a beautiful swan. Rejoice over the joyously flavorful and long lived 2008. Now the 2018, an amazing wine for its depth, complexity and structure. The long, cool growing season rendered beautiful, evenly-ripened Pinot Noir with mouth-watering acidity and firm, longevity-assuring tannins. This cuvée includes 22 individually fermented and barreled lots from RSV’s organically farmed Carneros vineyards, selected from thirteen heirloom selections and French clones of Pinot Noir. The wine is framed by small oak casks (30% new) selected from seven French coopers and aged in the RSV caves for a year. *Jeff Virnig, Winemaker*

Tasting Notes

An elegant, classic Pinot Noir with a slow reveal that gets better with each taste. A superb growing season resulted in pristine fruit at optimal ripeness from RSV’s organically farmed vineyards. Beautiful aromatics, deliciously complex fruit and spice notes with a youthful vivaciousness make for a perfectly balanced wine. Aromas and flavors of fresh rose petal, lilac and sage sit atop cranberry, Bing cherry, strawberry, blood orange and rhubarb while savory herb, cinnamon and earth notes add a baseline of depth. Pristine and alive, this wine has a beautifully long and vibrant finish. *Phil Abram (03/2023)*





ET TU...

I wonder if the Romans drank Pinot Noir or, if they did, if it was any good. I do know these juicy Roman spiced-scented chicken skewers are the bomb with RSV's Los Carneros Pinot Noir. I'm not quite sure exactly what makes this match so unexpected and magnificent; but it's just plain delicious. I'll leave it at that.

Simple, aromatic, pleasingly-perfect, fire-kissed chicken and silky luscious Pinot Noir. That's pretty much a bullseye. Fire up the grill!

Until the Next Wine... *Maria*

GRILLED ROMAN-SPICED CHICKEN SKEWERS

Yogurt helps to tenderize the chicken and carry the flavors of the spices to every nook and cranny of the meat beautifully. If you're not a fan of chicken breast, use the thigh and leave on the fire a touch longer. Serves 4

½ cup full-fat Greek yogurt
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon Apicius Herb + Spice Blend*, ground finely

2 teaspoons kosher salt
4 boneless skinless chicken breasts,
cut into 4-6 ½ inch thick strips each

1. In a large bowl, mix together the yogurt, olive oil, ground spices, and salt until evenly combined.
2. Add the chicken and mix together to coat chicken evenly.
3. Marinate for 30 minutes at room temp or in refrigerator for 1 hour. Let rest at room temp for 30 minutes before grilling.
4. Thread 4 -5 strips of chicken on 4 18-inch metal skewers
5. Heat grill to high.
6. Place the skewers on the hot grill and grill for 7 minutes until is golden and caramelized. Turn the skewers over and grill 7 minutes more or until cooked through.

* Apicius Spice blend is inspired by ancient Rome's greatest surviving cookbook *Apicius*, also known as *De Re Coquinara*. It is a fascinating glimpse into the world of Roman Imperial cooking. The blend is comprised of mustard seeds, celery seeds, oregano, rosemary, long pepper, cumin, fennel, ginger and caraway. If you are going to make you own blend use equal amounts of mustard seed, celery seed, oregano and rosemary, half the amount of long pepper, cumin and ginger and one quarter the amount of caraway seed. So measure would look like this - 1 Tablespoon: 1 ½ teaspoons: ¾ teaspoon.

FRIED POTATO BATONS WITH PARSLEY AND GARLIC

These golden crisp potatoes scented with parsley and garlic hit all the right notes and make the perfect accompaniment to any grilled or roasted meat. Serves 4

8 small Yukon gold potatoes, about 1 ½ pounds
Kosher salt
4 medium unpeeled garlic cloves, pressed to crack the skin but not smashed

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons chopped parsley

1. Peel the potatoes and cut into ½ inch thick sticks/batons. They should look like stubby French fries.
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add 3 tablespoons of salt and then the potatoes. Bring back to a boil, then turn down heat to a simmer and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Drain the potatoes with a strainer over the sink and let the strainer rest over an empty bowl until potatoes are dry.
4. Heat a large sauté pan over high heat. Add the olive oil and when it shimmers, add the potatoes carefully to prevent the oil from splashing.
5. Brown the potatoes on all sides until lightly golden, then add the garlic cloves and continue cooking until garlic is soft and the potatoes are deeply golden. Turn down heat if potatoes brown too quickly.
6. Season with salt to taste, add the parsley and toss to coat. Turn out potatoes onto a serving plate and serve warm.





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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