



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

ABRAXAS, VIN DE TERROIR, SCINTILLA SONOMA VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS 2019





RESPLENDENT IN DIVERGENCE...

by Rob Sinskey

Abraxas!

The cat's name was "Ism." I believe I was in an altered state when I named the scrawny black and white kitten I had recently rescued from a wood pile next to my house in Mar Vista. It was 1980, I was enrolled in the Art Center College of Design and, as any self-respecting pseudo-intellectual college student would, I had either "Punk" or "Art Rock" on the turntable. One of my favorite altered state discs was a repetitive, driving, syncopated and contagiously danceable "Under Heavy Manners" by guitarist Robert Fripp with lyrics sung by David Byrne. The lyrics, quirkily performed with anxiety-inducing-charm, were a list of "-isms" i.e., Euphemism, Pessimism, Pointillism, Nihilism, Negativism, Positivism, Cynicism, Terrorism... etc., ending with the refrain: "I am resplendent in divergence" called out without backing music as if it were a life-affirming/self-convincing mantra. From then on, or at least for the next few months, everything was just another "-ism" and divergence from the norm was a conscious decision.

The spirit of divergence continues to influence our decisions... like selling the winery and buying a farm. We planted Pinot Noir when consumers were buying Cabernet and made a dry Rosé when sweet White Zin was all the rage. We produced elegant, lower alcohol wines when consumers were lining up for bombastic fruit bombs and we quit making Chardonnay when it was at peak popularity and put our energies into aromatic white varieties instead.

Abraxas is resplendent in divergence. An anomaly amongst the mostly Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc varietal whites that dominate the shelves. Instead, this single vineyard wine is made of four aromatic varieties - Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer grown in RSV's organically farmed Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard in Carneros. If you are new to it, It will become the wine you never knew you needed. If you've been enjoying it for years, then you are already resplendent in divergence.

Winegrowing Notes

RSV's organic farming model was created to not only make better wine but, in the words of Rudolph Steiner, "to heal an ailing earth" through regenerative farming practices that sequester more carbon than is released or produced. These methods not only reduce our carbon footprint; they produce better wine from healthier, more resilient vines.

The organic, regenerative Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard was cobbled together in the late '90's from a horse ranch, an abandoned Christmas tree farm and fields of detritus. The soil was compacted and either too rich in horse manure or lacking in organic material from years of abuse and neglect. RSV spent decades growing soil balancing cover crops to heal an ailing earth.

The vines, planted in adjacent blocks of Riesling, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer, naturally access the nutrients they need from the decomposing cover crop and compost. The grapes ripen slowly in the cooler Carneros region, developing deep and complex flavors while maintaining bright, natural acidity. Each variety is harvested independently with almost a month passing between the Gewürztraminer and Riesling picks. All the grapes are hand-harvested at night to retain freshness, whole cluster pressed and cool fermented in a method that only enhances the deep, complex flavors while maintaining a vibrant mouthfeel. Each vintage is blended by taste to create a naturally balanced, delicious wine.

Tasting Notes

Distinctively unique and refreshing, Abraxas is exemplary of an organically farmed, well crafted, terroir-driven cuvée of Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer. It is a shimmering beauty of a wine, with aromas of chamomile, lemongrass and vanilla blossom that lead into an array of juicy, yet crisp fruit flavors like Meyer lemon, kumquat, grapefruit, Anjou pear, honeydew melon and lychee. Generous layers of fruit are balanced by a firm mineral backbone with hints of briny oyster shell and flint with a zippy finish.





THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

It takes a special wine to match with all the elements in salad, particularly wine's hell-ish cousin, vinegar. For a time, sommeliers looked at Gruner Veltliner to do the heavy lifting but it eventually got tired and moved to the back of the line. Chefs tried vinegar's wimpy sibling verjus (the high acid juice from underripe grapes) to make salad more appealing with wine but its wimpiness didn't further the cause.

This salad : wine thing is a problem. I love salad. Sometimes that's all I want to eat for lunch or dinner and I want to drink a wine that goes swimmingly well with it. Abraxas, the magical wine that solves everything, fixes the problem.

The salad that follows was designed to blend harmoniously with all that Abraxas brings to the table. It is a wine with ethereal fruit, vivacious acidity and a penchant for salt, vinegar and smoky bits like bacon. This salad is crunchy, salty, sweet and savory with the beautiful perfume of dill and tarragon. A real crowd pleaser, just like Abraxas.

If you don't want salad, throw everything on two slices of toasted bread and make yourself a mind-blowing, amped up version of a BLT.

Until the Next Wine... *Maria*

BLTBCH (Bacon, Lettuce, Tomato, Blue Cheese, Herbs)

You can make this salad year round but it's never as good as in the summer when lettuces and herbs in the garden are booming and tomatoes are juicy and sweet. Serve it for lunch, dinner or as a side dish with a simply prepared fish, chicken or steak. If you need some carbs, add croutons but toss them lightly with vinaigrette before adding so they integrate nicely with the other salad components. Serves 4

2 large celery stalks, washed and trimmed, sliced on the bias 1/8 inch thick	1 pound crunchy leafy green such as little gem or romaine, washed and dried well
2 pints colorful cherry tomatoes, washed, drained well and cut in half	¼ cup dill sprigs
Kosher salt	¼ cup tarragon leaves and tiny sprigs
Freshly ground black pepper	½ pound tangy blue cheese*, crumbled
12 ounces thick cut bacon, sliced into bite-sized pieces, cooked until crisp on edges but still a bit chewy at center	Vinaigrette, recipe follows

1. In a medium bowl, toss together the celery and tomatoes with 2 tablespoons of dressing. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Let sit for 10 minutes.
2. Add the bacon to the celery mix and toss. Reserve.
3. Place the lettuce in a large salad bowl. Add the herbs and toss to distribute evenly.
4. Add the celery mixture to the lettuce bowl and toss. Add more vinaigrette to your taste and toss again. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Sprinkle half the blue cheese over the top and toss lightly. Then top with the remaining blue cheese and grind a little pepper over the top. Serve immediately.

*Point Reyes Blue is my favorite because of its tanginess and salt content.

VINAIGRETTE

Adjust the ratio of olive oil and vegetable oil to your liking. I like my vinaigrettes tangy so I usually use a 50/50 vinegar to oil ratio. Yield: 1 + cup

1 large shallot, minced	Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup red wine vinegar	¼ cup expeller pressed vegetable oil such as sunflower or safflower
2 teaspoons granulated sugar	½ cup extra virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons kosher salt	

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the shallot, vinegar, sugar, salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Let sit for 10 minutes to allow the salt to dissolve then whisk again and taste the seasoning balance. Adjust the salt and sugar to taste. The oil will mellow out both so make sure the vinegar has some punch from salt with a hint of sweetness.
2. Whisk in the oils and reserve at room temp if using within a few hours. If not, refrigerate and bring to room temp to serve. Whisk before adding to salad.





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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