



# ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

MUSCAT À PETITS GRAINS, SCINTILLA SONOMA VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS 2019





# THE UNEXPECTED GUEST...

by Rob Sinskey

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## *Dinner With Friends!*

A cooling wind picks up just as we sit down to dinner in the back yard of our close friends' house. It's a welcome respite from the mid-summer sun and the busy work week. The smell of charcoal smoke and grilling steak fills the air along with the intoxicating aroma of Maria's fresh-from-the-oven zucchini gratin. There is nothing better than sitting with friends and sharing a good meal. It is the reason we "wine people" are in this business. It's not just about the wine; it's about food, friends, family and conviviality.

My father used to jokingly say that good wine makes good company better and bad company tolerable. Well, I will expand upon that misguided sentiment with: bringing the right wine to a party makes everyone happier. The challenge with most backyard BBQ's is the mix of flavors, smokey meats, sweet and salty sauces, vinegary salads... it's why many prefer to pop a beer or mix a cocktail.

There is an alternative in an obscure aromatic white wine that will work with all the flavors and textures assaulting your palate... Muscat à Petits Grains. You're not going to find this wine at your usual wine shop but you, a Glutton and Gourmand\*, have connections and a rare bottle in your wine fridge. Don't expect everyone to "ooh and aah" when you pull it out at the party. A matter of fact, you might get more of a "WTF" reaction! That is, until you pull the cork and pour everyone a glass. Then you will get more of a "What is that...it's delicious!" and "I didn't know a Muscat could be dry and so yummy!"... and then my favorite: "This wine is perfect with Maria's Zucchini Gratin!" - there is nothing better for a perfect evening than the perfectly unexpected wine.

***\*If, by chance, you are not a Glutton and Gourmand or a Seasonal Glutton... [www.robertsinskey.com/membership/sign-up/](http://www.robertsinskey.com/membership/sign-up/)***

## *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 Muscat á Petits Grains vines 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. The grapes are harvested by hand at night to retain freshness, whole cluster pressed and cool fermented in a method that only enhances the depth of flavor while maintaining a vibrant mouthfeel.

## *Tasting Notes*

Any day that RSV's organically farmed Muscat á Petits Grains from the Scintilla Sonoma vineyard hits the table is a good day. The wine is a joy. The 2019 rendition is fresh, supple and just plain delicious. Aromatics pop with floral notes of gardenia, fennel pollen and lemon verbena. The flavors are more subtle than the aromas with bright, tart fruit notes of Key lime, Meyer lemon, Pink Lady apple and Honeydew melon that finish long, dry and clean. This vintage was held back to temper its baby fat and help it develop elegant complexity. It is a balanced and delicious wine that works with a broad range of challenging cuisines from BBQ to Indian, Thai, artichokes, asparagus, salads and seafood. (07/2023)

480 (1 2 x 750ml) cases produced





## TOO MUCH. TOO FAST. TOO SOON.

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Hope springs from the zucchini seeds I plant in May. I dream about the dishes I'll make from the fruit these plants will bear in a few short months.

In mid-July, reality hits. The six plants that sprung from those carefully planted seeds are loaded with zucchini some the size of baseball bats. That's when the anxiety to put them to use goes into overdrive. You can only give away so many before the market for free zucchini becomes saturated.

I have a quiver of recipes in my bag suited for overgrown zucchini. The big ones are quite delicious once the spongy seed lines are removed with a spoon. This zucchini gratin recipe, scented with Svanetian salt, will use up 1 to 2 of these monsters.

Svanetian salt comes from the Svaneti region in the mountainous north-western part of Georgia where its unique fragrance and taste is used to flavor meat, fish and potato dishes. Like potatoes, meaty sliced zucchini is the perfect vehicle to carry this scented salt.

This fragrant salt is also a delicious match for RSV's Muscat. Our dry Muscat has a beautiful texture that carries its floral and citrus overtones beautifully. These characteristics meld seamlessly with the Georgian spices. The heady fragrance in both the wine and food fill me with joy and make me forget for a moment about the dozen or so behemoth zucchini waiting for me in the garden.

Until the Next Wine.... *Maria*



## GEORGIAN-SPICED ZUCCHINI GRATIN

*This gratin is delicious with or without the cream so add it as you like or not. For a bit of color sliced tomatoes or halved cherry tomatoes can be added to the layers. Garnish with a pile of fresh herbs like dill sprigs and parsley leaves lightly dressed in olive oil if so desired. Serves 6 to 8*

Extra virgin olive oil	1 ½ tablespoons Svanetian salt, divided, recipe follows
4 pound large zucchini, seeded and sliced thinly	Freshly ground black pepper
1 yellow onion, slice thinly	1 lemon to zest over the layers
1 ½ cups finely grated Parmesan, divided	1 cup heavy cream, optional

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Drizzle a 9" x 13" deep baking dish with olive oil.
2. Layer one-third of the sliced squash and onion in the bottom of the dish.
3. Sprinkle with one-third of the Parmesan and 1 ½ teaspoons of the seasoned salt. Drizzle with olive oil. Grind a little black pepper over and then grate a little lemon zest over.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 for another layer.
5. On the top layer, repeat step 2 and 3 minus the Parmesan. Because the gratin bakes for a long time at high heat you risk burning the Parmesan so you will add it later in the baking.
6. Place the dish in the preheated oven for 30 minutes. At the 30 minute mark add the cream if using. Continue to bake for 30 minutes then add the Parmesan and bake for an additional 15 to 20 minutes until the Parmesan is golden.
7. Serve hot, warm or at room temperature. Garnish with fresh herbs if desired.

## SVANETIAN SALT

*This salt mixture contains 8 ingredients. Marigold is important to the mix. The recipe is amiss without it. If you can't find dried marigold at the spice store, find some organic marigold and dry the heads yourself. I prefer to buy whole seeds. For the best perfume I lightly toast them until they are fragrant. I grind them after they have cooled. The dill and marigold should not be toasted.*

*To incorporate the marigold and dill, measure and mix together the ground seeds for the recipe. Add a tablespoon of the ground spice mix to a spice grinder. Measure and add the dill and marigold to the grinder then grind to a fine uniform texture then add it back to the spice mix. Yield: approximately 8 ounces*

1 head (3 ounces) garlic	1 ½ tablespoons ground blue fenugreek
7 tablespoons coarse white salt	1 ½ tablespoons ground red pepper
2½ tablespoons ground coriander	1 ½ tablespoons ground dried marigold
1 ½ tablespoons ground dried dill	½ tablespoon ground cumin

1. Remove skins from the garlic and crush the cloves in a mortar and pestle with 1 tablespoon of coarse salt. Reserve.
2. Mix all of the other dry ingredients together with the remaining salt.
3. Add the garlic to the mixture. And work with your fingers until it is evenly combined and thoroughly mixed.
4. The mixed ingredients will be moist. Store in a sealed non-reactive container for up to two days in the refrigerator, otherwise freeze.

**Note:** You can mix together the dry ingredients and store at room temperature then mix to taste with garlic as needed. Around 1 tablespoon of garlic to 1 ½ tablespoons of dried spice mix.





## FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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