



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

MARCIEN, PROPRIETARY RED, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2016





THE GUARDIAN OF AGRICULTURE...

By Rob Sinskey

resides at the no-harm farm!

A little orange dot stands out in the dark night sky amongst a shimmering sea of stars. The sun, the giver of life and death, emits rays that pass through the thin atmosphere to reflect off its barren surface; a surface scarred by collisions with celestial bodies, eroded by wind and carved by what we assume were once rivers of water. Its very nature leads to speculation, fantasy, curiosity and adventure. It beckons the pioneers, the scientists, the crazies and the eccentrics to accept its challenge to one day harbor life and support a colony of humans even though we have found nothing that would indicate life has ever survived on the Martian planet.

The Romans believed Mars was the guardian of agriculture. Ironic since it is a cold desert that, unless we develop the fictional Star Trekkian terraforming device, will never support life as we know it. Yet we somehow look to the orange orb as a plan B for when we destroy life on our home planet. Maybe Mars could be a cautionary tale of what could happen if we continue to neglect the rhythms of nature.

There is a genius to the natural world that's shaped everything we know. It's the magic that allows life to evolve while creating checks and balances in a complex dance that is beyond the comprehension of the average human. We have grown fat and happy manipulating nature to serve us when we should be serving nature. It is when we change things too quickly - as we have done over the last century as we pump carbon into the atmosphere - that nature can no longer keep up and it begins to collapse as species die and the interconnectedness breaks.

The guardian of agriculture should also be the guardian of nature. Farmers have the choice to either conquer nature or to strike a deal and work with nature, to help it do its job for the benefit of all life. Using a regenerative and/or biodynamic model is one way farmers can help nature; practices like employing no-till or minimum-till, year-round cover crop, animals to mow, hedgerows to encourage insects, animals and birds, and more. The goal is to do no harm as we farm by staying connected to nature while crafting a superlative wine named Marcien, the guardian of agriculture and nature.



Winegrowing Notes

Thirty five years ago, RSV decided to farm better grapes organically. The idea was to overcompensate for the damage done by conventional farming and encourage natural processes so a vine could access nutrients naturally while withstanding extremes caused by climate change. The soil is better today than when we started. It now has higher organic content, better structure, and healthier populations of mycorrhizae, microbes and earthworms than before. The soil percolates water while protecting topsoil and the vines are less vigorous in a healthy, balanced way, producing nutritionally sound grapes that require less in the cellar - purity from dirt to table.

The Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, that make up the cuvée of Marcien, thrive with the long, cool growing season enjoyed by RSV's organically farmed Carneros Vineyards, where they develop delicious flavor at lower sugars for a balanced wine with lower alcohol and bright acidity. Combine the cool region with RSV's organic/biodynamic/regenerative farming and minimalist winemaking and you have the ingredients for a superlative wine.

Tasting Notes

The 2016 Marcien is a rare wine. Not only is it produced in small quantities from RSV's organically farmed, Carneros Vineyards, it is also a current-release, bottle-aged wine. It is an elegant wine, crafted from three varieties selected to emphasize finesse over power. It is an absolutely, good-looking, head turner. Lush, quintessentially ripe fruit meets chiseled structure for pristine balance. Violet, black plum, red currant, pomegranate, bay leaf and mocha lead a cavalcade of flavors that linger through a long, firm finish not often seen around these parts. The wine is delicious now in its youth and demands the company of roasted fowl or game, but 2016 is also a vintage to add to your cellar for years of enjoyment as the wine ages gracefully.

Phil Abram and Rob Sinskey (11/2023)

SPEECHLESS

Marcien leaves me speechless. The wine is fresh and elegant despite 5-8 years in the bottle before release. The beautiful fruit comes into focus with the support of a modicum of spice from the two years of barrel age. Its bright, natural acidity provides a framework to keep it moving through its evolution without falling apart. This grace comes from careful attention in the vineyards and hands off winemaking that lets the terroir shine through. Its pure mastery in the glass is best exhibited at the table where Marcien's versatility with food is unbounded.

I like to keep things simple. You can't get much simpler than a pan-roasted duck breast accompanied by richly decadent fondant potatoes. These potatoes are coming back into fashion after being long-forgotten. What's old has become new again and much appreciated by our taste buds.

The duck breast is simply prepared. The skin and fat are scored to help with crispness. A little salt, pepper and time in a hot pan will yield an exquisite bird to serve alongside the potatoes. Marcien will be there to wash it all down and freshen your palate between each and every bite.

A simple meal and an elegant wine, both are dependent on carefully grown and raised ingredients that fall together harmoniously for a winning combination.

Until the Next Wine... Maria



ROAST DUCK BREAST

These duck breasts are simply roasted with salt and pepper and, if you like, a bit of thyme. Duck breast are usually packaged as a one whole breast made up of two half breasts. This recipe calls for 2 half breasts. Serves 4

2 large half duck breasts, 8 ounces each
Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper
Thyme (optional)

1. Trim the excess skin and fat back to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the edges of the meat. Use a very sharp small knife to score the skin in a small diamond pattern while taking care to not cut into the meat.
2. Season both sides of the breasts with salt and pepper.
3. Heat a cast iron pan over medium high heat. When the bottom of the pan starts to warm, add the duck breast skin side down. The pan will slowly heat and, as it does, will render and melt the fat from beneath the skin.
4. As the fat accumulates, hold the breasts in place with a pair of tongs and tip the pan so the fat pours out into a heatproof dish. Repeat this as the fat accumulates so the breasts keep pan-roasting instead of frying in the fat.
5. Pan roast for 8 to 10 minutes until the skin is golden and crisp. Adjust the heat as necessary to keep the pan hot but not so hot that it smokes or browns the breast too quickly before the fat has rendered and the skin is thin and golden crisp.
6. After the skin is crisp and the edges of the breast are opaque. Flip the breast over and cook for 5 minutes on the opposite meaty side.
7. Remove to a plate and let the breast rest skin side up for 5 minutes before slicing. Slice along the diagonal into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick slices.





FONDANT POTATOES

These decadent tender potatoes are fluffy on the inside with a slightly chewy base, thoroughly infused with flavor from stock, butter, thyme and garlic. Starchy potatoes will best soak up the juices while yellow potatoes will have a chewier exterior and waxy texture on the inside. Serves 4 to 6

4 medium, long russet potatoes peeled, about 1 ½ pounds
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
3 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced in half

2 sprigs of fresh thyme
2 to 3 cups rich chicken stock
Garnish:
Sprigs of fresh thyme
Maldon flaked salt

1. Peel the potatoes and slice the ends off, so they're flat. Slice off a good amount so the potatoes are the same width the entire length of the potato.
2. Cut the potatoes into 1" tall rounds (you should get 4 rounds out of a large, long potato).
3. Heat 2 tablespoons of butter in a medium to large cast iron pan on medium high heat until butter starts to bubble and brown on the edges.
4. Place the potatoes in the pan, flat side down and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until golden brown. Season with salt and pepper then flip and continue cooking until the other side is golden brown. Season with salt and pepper. You may need to move them slightly a couple of times to prevent them from sticking to the bottom of the pan.
5. Add the remaining butter, garlic and thyme and let the butter melt in the pan. Stir to infuse the garlic and thyme into the butter for a minute.
6. Ladle the chicken stock over the potatoes to cover. Pour it in slowly and carefully as it will bubble and may splash.
7. Bring the stock to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cover the potatoes with a round circle of parchment paper with a hole cut in the center. You can also place a lid, slightly ajar on top to allow evaporation.
8. Cook until potatoes are tender. Add more stock if needed. Cook until the stock is reduced to a nice shiny glaze. The pan should never go dry. There should be a tiny amount of stock left at the end of cooking – giving the base of the potatoes a slight stickiness.
9. Once tender remove from the heat and transfer to a serving plate. Serve warm and top with sprigs of fresh thyme and a sprinkling of Maldon salt.



FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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