



# ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

---

PINOT NOIR, ARIES VIOLET, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2022





Pinot Nor, Aries Violet, Los Carneros, Napa Valley 2

# THE UNDERDOG GRAPE...

by Rob Sinskey

## *lost in Napa again!*

The “Disco Peugeot” was an unreliable steed. A low-mileage, mid-70’s mom-wagon, it was modified with home bookshelf speakers, a cassette deck and a killer amp. I was working in Los Angeles, living in a one-room Venice Beach apartment, photographing bands and trying to break into the photo/film industry when I was asked to document a harvest at the Acacia winery in the Carneros region of Napa. My father had become a limited partner with the idea that his grapes would someday become Sinskey Vineyard designated wines under the Acacia label and the managing partners wanted to take advantage of my fledgling career and low day-rate.

I had never before been in Napa when I crossed the Golden Gate bridge and piloted the Disco Peugeot around the bay and into wine country. My handful of cassettes included several Neil Young albums, peppered with a few Grateful Dead, British Invasion and some early Punk selections; but I am almost sure it was Neil playing on the cassette deck that day.

*“There was a fanfare blowin’ to the sun  
That was floating on the breeze  
Look at mother nature on the run in the nineteen seventies  
Look at mother nature on the run in the nineteen seventies”*

### *After The Gold Rush*

The first thing I noticed was the rhythmic nature of the vineyards and the way the fall light played off the golden leaves on the vines. The second thing I noticed was the fragrance of fermentation. It was, and still is, a swoon inducing aroma. The third thing I noticed was the loss of power and the sudden missing of the Disco Peugeot’s already underpowered motor. I needed a mechanic, and quick.

I limped into the local service station only to be received by a group of mechanics snickering... “Is that a French car?” I responded in the affirmative. “We wouldn’t have a clue how to work on it. Why don’t you try...” and they sent me down the road to the next mechanic. I repeated this scenario at each garage until I found one who would actually look under the hood. “I can fix it, but I’m going to have to order a special wrench just to remove the spark plugs and parts will be a special order. It might take a few weeks!” I resigned myself to being stranded in Napa. It was a happy accident that would change my life.

I spent the next few weeks documenting harvest at a winery that specialized in single vineyard Pinot Noirs. I was invited to tastings of individual lots, heirloom selections, different fermentation techniques, and young and old Pinots from different regions. I played fly on the wall as they talked about the subtleties of the grape, what defined a classic Burgundian-style Pinot Noir and how they could achieve that from Carneros grapes. I sat in as they discussed marketing and discovered that they named the winery with an “A” so it would be first on an alphabetical wine list. Not the most sophisticated marketing, but it was effective.

I learned to love the underdog grape and respect those who chose to work with it at a time when it was not appreciated by the wine consuming public. I gained an insight into the times before the clones; when almost all selections of Pinot Noir were field selections, each with their own unique character. The lessons learned while “stranded in Napa” are with us to this day. It formed our DNA and is the reason our Pinot Noir is unique, elegant, balanced and is a good companion at the dinner table. To paraphrase the Kinks; “We’re not like everybody else!”

## ***Winegrowing Notes***

Aries Pinot Noir “Violet” is an evolution in style; a little bit old school, backed by decades of field/clone selection and regional knowledge, influenced by the new reality of farming in the age of climate change. The grapes were selected from four lots within RSVnapa’s organic and regeneratively farmed Carneros Vineyards. Night picked from late August through the second week of September, the grapes were gently de-stemmed and the whole berries were conveyed to open top tanks. The must was delicately cap-irrigated one time per day. After a long, cool freshness-preserving fermentation where the temperature never exceeded 71 F, the must was pressed and the wine was allowed to rest before bottling. It is a pure expression of the vineyard, vintage and grape.

## ***Tasting Notes***

A young, vibrant Pinot Noir with an old world soul. Floral and fruit notes of violet, lavender, macerated berries like cranberry, raspberry, fraises des bois take the lead and dance with a spice note of cinnamon, cardamom and black tea. This wine has verve with a mouthwatering crispness and bright minerality balanced by supple tannin. If you close your eyes and take a sip, this wine just might whisper to you in a French accent. Yummy and incredible with food. (12/2023)

***940 (12 x 750ml) cases produced***



# FRAGRANCE

---

Fall chestnut harvest season is highly celebrated in Japan. The fresh chestnuts, cooked with short-grained rice and dashi, is subtle, delicious and has a beautiful texture. The fragrance of this rice and chestnut dish is deeply imprinted in my brain. It is a scratch that needs to be itched the minute fall comes breezing in.

I knew I found the perfect match for fall chestnuts when I first tasted this nutty black rice from the Piemonte in Italy. The chestnuts add sweetness and bump up the fragrant notes of the rice to create the perfect chestnut rice dish.

Cooking and peeling chestnuts is an arduous task. It becomes more arduous if you can't find really fresh chestnuts. Already peeled organic chestnuts is the solution. They are somewhat blasé just out of the packet but toasting them in butter brings out their sweet nuttiness and gives them a light, crunchy texture so they don't disappear into the dish.

And what to serve with this delightful dish? The bright, fragrant Aries Violet, of course! This vivid hued Pinot Noir, bursting with fresh, berry-fruit aromas and underlying broody, earth notes, is the perfect mate for this revamped version of chestnut rice. Enjoy!

Until the Next Wine... Maria





## BLACK RICE WITH TOASTED CHESTNUTS

*Lucedio black rice is a hybrid of Chinese Forbidden rice with a local Piemontese variety. Luckily it carries the best traits from each of its parents. It has the rich nuttiness and fragrance of Forbidden rice and the elegant long-grained, slightly chewy texture of the Piemontese variety. The cooking method is unique for this variety. It cooks like pasta, albeit a bit longer. If you can't find this black rice, substitute basmati rice. Fold the cooled basmati rice into the chestnut and onion mixture and gently reheat. Serves 4 to 6*

1 cup Lucedio black rice. Optional substitute: basmati rice  
Kosher salt  
3 tablespoon unsalted butter  
1 small onion, minced

1 cup (about 5 ounces) cooked chestnuts, crushed into coarse chunks  
Freshly ground black pepper  
Parsley leaves to garnish

1. Add the rice to a pan full of cold water. Bring to a boil and salt the rice. Water should be lightly salty. Cook the rice at a high simmer for 30 minutes for al dente. Add more water if necessary. Drain and reserve. If using basmati rice, cook as directed by on the package.
2. Add 3 tablespoons of butter to a large sauté pan over medium high heat. When the edges start to brown add the onion and cook until lightly golden, stirring occasionally.
3. Add the chestnuts and continue to cook until the chestnuts are toasted and golden, stirring as needed. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Add the rice to the pan and stir until all the ingredients are thoroughly mixed. Heat thoroughly, season to taste, and turn out into a serving dish. Garnish with parsley leaves.

## BUTTON MUSHROOMS IN BUTTER

*This is a delightful side dish full of sweetness and fragrance. It's glorious and simple. Serve alongside noodles and roasted meats of all varieties. I always double the recipe to have leftovers for the next morning's omelet. Save the trimmed stems for stock. Trimming the stems is a nice tidy look for the mushrooms but you can leave them on if you wish. Serves 4*

4 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 pound button mushrooms, washed and stems trimmed flat with the cap  
3 bushy sprigs fresh thyme  
2 medium shallots sliced thinly

Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley

1. Heat a medium sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the butter. When the edges of the butter begin to brown add the mushrooms.
2. Toss to coat the mushrooms evenly with butter, then add the thyme and sliced shallots. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Cook until the mushrooms start to exude their juices, about 3 minutes.
3. Give the mushrooms a good stir then cover 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 slow evaporation.
4. Reduce heat to low and cook for 15 to 20 minutes at a slow simmer until most of the liquid has evaporated and mushrooms are starting to caramelize in the butter.
5. Remove the thyme stems from the mushrooms and discard. Toss the mushrooms with chopped parsley and spoon into a serving dish. Serve warm.





## FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

---

Robert Sinskey Vineyards & Wilding Farm  
4059 Old Sonoma Road  
Napa, CA 94559  
707.944.9090  
robertsinskey.com

Winemaker: Jeff Virnig  
Chef: Maria Helm Sinskey  
Photos and Text: Rob Sinskey  
gluttons@robertsinskey.com

