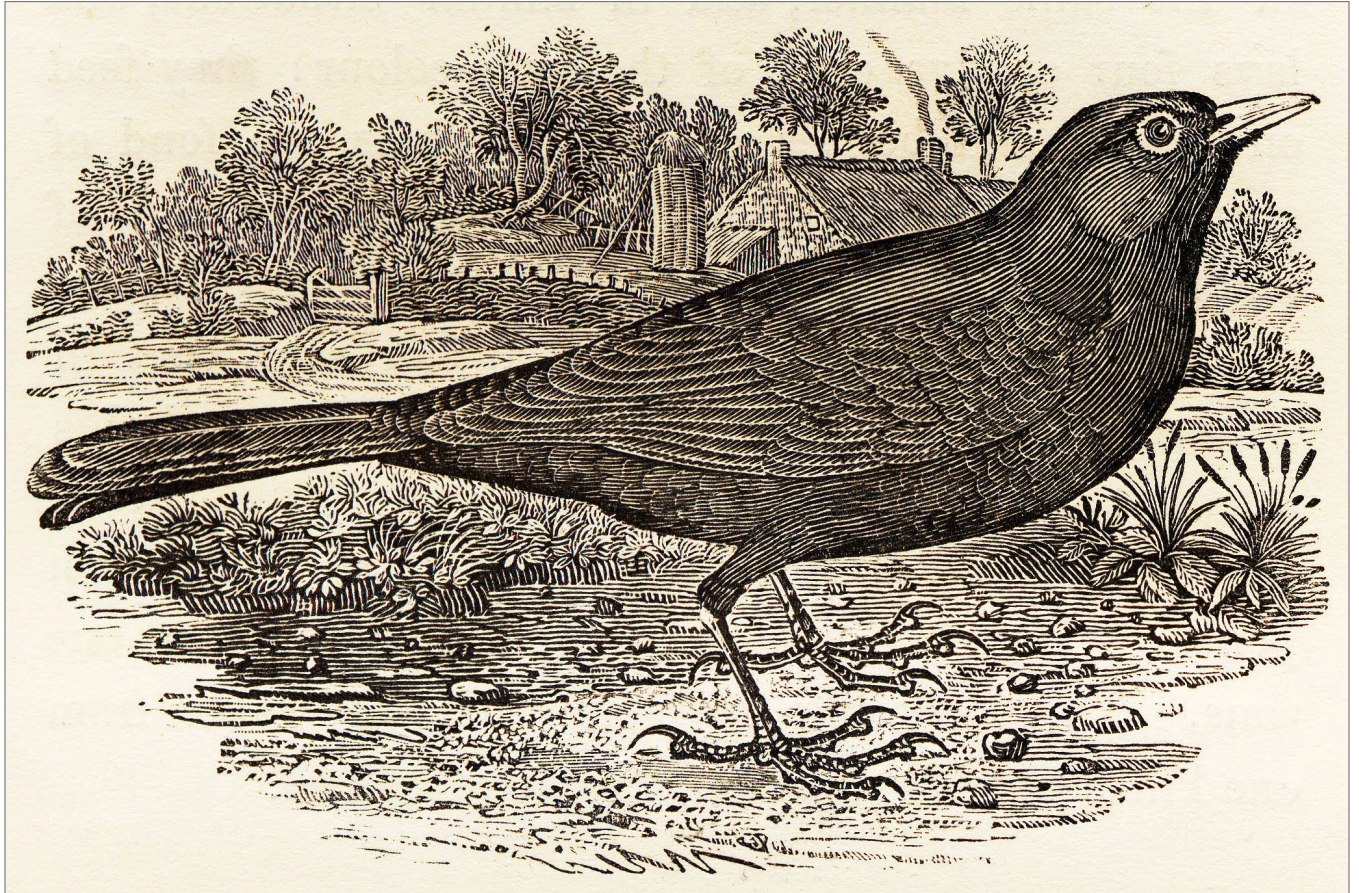




ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

MERLOT, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2017





THE BLACKBIRD IN THE VINEYARD...

By Rob Sinskey

Le Merle, the blackbird, came to me in a dream last night. It said, "If you get out of my way, I will grow into something beautiful." It stared directly into my eyes as it spoke and cocked its head from side to side in the most bird-like way.

The dream baffled me. Was it a subconscious replay of a meeting some two decades ago with the Alsatian vigneron Jean-Michel Deiss? As we ended our visit and saying our goodbyes, he offered these words of wisdom: "Follow nature and the rest will come!" At the time, that statement was just as baffling as those of Le Merle, but I have since learned to take his cryptic advice as gospel. Quite simply, work with, not against nature and plant what is appropriate for your land. Then, get out of its way.

In the dark arts, blackbirds symbolize purification, the underworld or our dark nature. That just seems like a bunch of BS... same as my dream. I was hoping to find some ancient allegory to help me tell a story involving nature, blackbirds and a sense of place - but I could find none... so I fabricated one.

You see, "Le Merle" is the root of "Merl-ot" - the black grape of Bordeaux. It was identified in 1784 as a superlative grape for the "Right Bank" regions of Saint Émilion and Pomerol. From there it spread throughout France and the world with varying degrees of success. Merlot is actually a very forgiving grape and good wine can be made from grapes grown in many different micro-climates, but it is sublime when grown in a region it "likes" - one with a clay-based soil and a long, cool growing season where the grapes can develop flavor at lower sugar levels for an elegant, age-worthy, cuisine-oriented wine.

A little birdie once told us that RSV's organically farmed Carneros Vineyards were the perfect place to let this grape to grow into a beautiful wine. I am glad we listened.

Winegrowing Notes

RSV's organically farmed vineyards in the Carneros region of Napa are ideal for the Merlot grape, especially in the North of the region at the base of the Mayacamas mountain range. The long, cool growing season coaxes full flavor development from the grape at lower sugars for a balanced, delicious wine with moderate alcohol.

2017 was a pivotal year in Napa Valley. The vintage ended with one of the most trying times in our history. Climate change driven fires roared through the valley, threatening the winery, vineyards, homes and lives. We were fortunate to have picked this Merlot before the fires began.

The good news: the fruit that came in was gorgeous. Low yields combined with organic, regenerative farming allowed the grapes to achieve full physiological ripeness while a night harvest helped maintain natural acidity.

Tasting Notes

An elegant and delicious Merlot from RSV's organic and regeneratively farmed Carneros Vineyards. The 2017 edition of this wine exhibits lush notes of sun-kissed summer plum and black cherry with hints of black tea and cacao that resolve with a backbone of supple tannin and bright, mouth watering crispness. The additional bottle age of this wine adds to its elegance and showcases the best of the old vines planted in the cool, foggy Carneros region. This wine is drinkable now with a complexity rarely seen in Merlot from the New World yet it has a structure that portends a glorious future for those desiring to stash this wine in their cellar for a later visit. (03/2024)

484 (12x750ml) cases produced



PEPPER POWER

Sweet peppers were the enemy when I was young. They always seemed to be green, mean and tasted nasty to my youthful palate. I despised them so much that when a bag of peppers hit the kitchen counter, I hit the road. I refused to be the recipient of any meal cooked with them.

I discovered, years later, that those peppers were just young and were harvested before any warmer colors and sweeter flavors emerged. In those days, shelf life was more important than flavor and the even, green color and under-ripeness helped them resist damage in transport and gave them longevity on the grocery store shelves.

My relationship with sweet peppers slowly evolved over the years and I eventually learned to enjoy their sweet, herbal taste once they ripened into a flashy red or yellow and lost their bitter green meanness of immaturity.

The sweetness of red and yellow sweet peppers marries beautifully with the bright red fruit flavors and aromas of RSV's handsomely crafted Merlot. The herbal grassy note of the peppers blends seamlessly with the dried herb notes of the wine.

The slowly braised chicken nicely absorbs the essences of the peppers and olives. You can use this same recipe for a pork shoulder with a longer, slower cooking time with equally delicious results. Either way, the finished dish goes beautifully with the Merlot.

Until the Next Wine... *Maria*



PIMENTON ROASTED CHICKEN THIGHS WITH PIQUILLO PEPPER, SWEET ONIONS AND OLIVES

Pimenton, smoked Spanish paprika, adds a subtle smokiness to this dish. Legs, thighs, leg/thigh combo or breast cuts can be interchanged. If you can find small-sized brightly colored sweet peppers sub for the large ones. They will soften and melt into the braise more thoroughly. Serves: 4 to 6

6 large bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 3 pounds)
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Extra virgin olive oil
2 medium onions, cut in thin wedges (about 4 cups)
2 cups thinly sliced yellow and red sweet peppers
(about 2 large or several small)

1 large garlic clove, minced
1 cup tomato puree
1 cup chicken stock
½ cup small pitted black and green olives, coarsely chopped
½ cup Spanish Piquillo peppers, cut in thin slices
2 teaspoons sweet or hot Pimenton

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Season the chicken with salt and pepper evenly on both sides.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add ¼ cup olive oil and then chicken skin side down and brown until crisp, turn over and brown other side. Remove to a plate and reserve.
4. Add the onions to the pan and cook until starting to brown. Add the sliced red and yellow peppers. Cook, stirring frequently until the peppers are wilted and starting to brown. Stir in the garlic and season with salt and pepper.
5. Stir in the tomato puree and chicken stock and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes to reduce the liquid by half.
6. Stir in the olives and Piquillo peppers and then top with the browned chicken. Sprinkle the Pimenton evenly over the top.
7. Place the pan in the oven and roast for 25 to 30 minutes until chicken is cooked through.
8. Remove the pan from the oven. Place the chicken on a serving plate and spoon the peppers and onions over and around or serve straight from the pan. Serve with a side of rice if desired.







FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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