



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

CABERNET FRANC, VANDAL VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2018





BEING FRANC...

By Rob Sinskey

Honestly!

Being young and clueless with wine as your career was sweet, especially in the roaring '90s. Anything around making, selling, and drinking wine was justified as work - and boy, we worked hard! I traveled the good ole US of A, mostly by plane and sometimes in my VW camper, meeting chefs and sommeliers and working with distributors. Once in a while, I slept on my new friends' couches, but mostly in dive motels and, occasionally, four-stars.

I found any excuse to pack a bag and head overseas on missions to Burgundy and Bordeaux in search of the secrets of terroir and authenticity. I met with vignerons in their cellars and vineyards by day while "researching" wine in its natural habitat at night, where we conducted "experiments" on ourselves.

One day, my New York distributor asked if I would be interested in joining him in Paris for a convention of winemakers looking for New World distribution. He was on a search for undiscovered family-run Burgundy and Loire producers. I don't think he finished asking when I blurted out in the affirmative. I flew into Paris in the midst of a transportation strike, and after spending several hours in a taxi, I got out and walked a couple more hours to the hotel. After dragging my suitcase up the stairs and opening the door, I discovered a frat-like atmosphere of half-empty wine and beer bottles with six guys sharing a room, some sleeping on the floor, others on couches, and a couple of lucky ones on their own twin bed. I knew this would be a trip with little sleep.

Half the crew would get in a taxi each day, and the other half would walk to the convention. Those with the least sleep the night before would take the cab and, because of the strike, it would take over an hour to arrive at the convention, enough to get in a good nap while the walkers would get some much-needed exercise and still arrive at the same time. After a couple of days of tasting followed by late nights of drink, uh, I mean, research, we decided to get out of town. Six guys in a van with me as the chauffeur headed to the Loire in search of the elusive Cabernet Franc.

Chinon was the destination. There, we met with established winemakers and not-so-established ones. The wines ranged from green and funky to amazingly delicious, delicate, and elegant. I found it particularly interesting since we had only been growing and making Cab Franc for a few years, and I wanted to learn more about the relationship between the grape, the climate, the region, and the vigneron's hand. I saw firsthand how their weather was much more challenging than ours. Their challenges were in achieving physiological (flavor) ripeness on a regular basis. The main challenge we faced then (and now) was the heat and finding cooler regions to plant so the fruit could develop flavor without becoming overripe. Our choice to plant Franc in the Carneros was affirmed.

While tasting in the cave of an elderly and proud vigneron, my naive curiosity got the best of me. I wanted to know the etymology of "Franc," - with the simple ask, "Why is it called Cabernet Franc?" Now, I knew Pinot derived from the pinecone shape of the grape cluster, and I was expecting to hear something similar. Instead, I was met with a glare that bordered on rage. The old man, glass in hand, paused for a moment and, as his broken English left his mouth, spittle flew as each word was delivered in a progressively louder voice, "EET ISS FRAAANC!" he screamed. I stood there a little befuddled and took a swig of his delicious wine. Sensing the Americans in front of him were a little dense, he added, "Eet iss TRUE, eet iss honest!" it was then I knew we had found the magic nugget of wisdom. The best Cabernet Franc is an honest wine. Grown well in the right location, nurtured but not manipulated, and simply crafted to be an elegant, balanced wine. It is Franc!

Winegrowing Notes

The foothills of the Mayacamas have a band of red volcanic soil that runs through the Cabernet Franc of RSV's organically farmed Vandal Vineyard. This red soil has a cult following among the growers and vintners of the region and is known for producing some of the most expressive, well-balanced Cabernet Francs on planet Earth.

The old Franc vines carry small clusters of beautiful grapes that hang on the vine until late in the season to be picked at optimal ripeness with lower sugar levels than other Napa "Bordeaux" varieties. The grapes are crushed, de-stemmed, and undergo native yeast fermentation. Aged for two years in the RSV caves before bottling, the wine is allowed to rest and evolve for four more years before release.

Tasting Notes

This is an honest Cabernet Franc. Grown well using organic, biodynamic and regenerative practices, it shows that growing Franc in the right location requires little more than attentive nurturing to produce an elegant, balanced, and delicious wine.

The stunning growing season of the 2018 vintage is revealed in a complex bouquet of violet and lavender with red and black fruit, such as pomegranate and cherry, backed by savory bay leaf and dried tarragon. Two years in 30% new French Oak barrels in the cave lends a touch of spice and earth typical of RSV's Northern Carneros Vandal Vineyard. The finish is long, driven by a perfectly balanced structure that will only become more elegant as the years pass by. Fortunately, RSVnapa has done some of the bottle aging for you to ensure this wine is delicious from day one! (11/2024) **480 cases produced.**





PIZZA NIGHT

When I was a kid, we had pizza at least once a week. Growing up in a large family it was a way to stretch the weekly food budget just a little bit further. It was also one of our favorite meals.

Pizza back then wasn't fancy Neapolitan style with a puffy crust crowned with a few scattered toppings, it was a crispy golden square of sturdy dough loaded with grated cheese of various sorts, some good thick tomato sauce, and whatever bits of pizza-worthy vegetables and meats that were left in the refrigerator. Pepperoni was god-like in our minds but seldom on our pizza.

Pizza was, and still is, my favorite meal. Great for one or two, or as an easy way to feed a crowd, pizza ticks all the boxes – bread, sauce, vegetables, meat and cheese all rolled into one delicious square; it's even better the next day.

Pizza is flexible. You can curate your toppings to match any wine. Use light, bright vegetables with a smattering of cheese for white wine and then cheese, mushrooms, and meat as you move towards red. The beauty is you can mix it up based on what topping mood you're in and the wine you crave.

I crave our Vandal Vineyard Cabernet Franc with this hearty Sicilian/ Detroit Pizza cross below. Its bright notes of plum and tart berries with a whiff of cocoa dust and mineral, accompanied by a beautiful full texture and long mouth-watering finish, is a super pizza wine. Our Cabernet Franc is ready to stand up to caramelized cheese and red sauce, as well as mushrooms and pepperoni and a few roasted sweet peppers.

Until the next wine... Maria

HOMEMADE SICILIAN-STYLE OR DETROIT-STYLE PIZZA

Choose whether you'd like cheese on top or below the sauce. Detroit style has the sauce on top of the cheese and Sicilian the opposite. With the exception of onions, cook your water-rich vegetables before topping your pizza, and do NOT reach for wet fresh mozzarella. Save it for your Neapolitan-style pizza. Too much water on top will boil your dough, and you won't get the crisp caramelized crust for which these pizzas are known. Serves 4 to 6

Pizza Dough – for best results, use a scale to measure ingredients:

4 cups (512 g) bread flour	2 teaspoons (8 g) instant dry yeast
2 teaspoons (12 g) kosher salt	2 cups (455 g) lukewarm water
	Extra virgin olive oil

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, and instant yeast.
2. Add the water and use a rubber spatula to mix the ingredients until the liquid is absorbed, and the dough forms a sticky ball.
3. Scrape down the sides of the bowl well so that the dough is in the center of the bowl. Rub the surface of the dough lightly with olive oil. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap.
4. Place in the fridge for at least 18 hours but up to 48 hours. You can also freeze the dough after mixing and then defrost and proof in the refrigerator.

To Bake the Pizza

Unsalted butter, room temperature	1 generous cup thick tomato sauce
2 tablespoons olive oil plus more to drizzle	¼ teaspoon dry oregano leaves
14 ounces of grated cheese, a mix of Monterey Jack, Cheddar, and	Red pepper flakes
Mozzarella. Do not use fresh mozzarella as it is too wet	Kosher salt

Toppings:

8 ounces mushrooms, sliced and sautéed in olive oil, seasoned well with	12 cherry tomatoes sliced in thirds, optional
salt and pepper	6 ounces thinly sliced pepperoni, use more if you love pepperoni
½ red onion, thinly sliced	½ cup roasted sweet peppers

1. Grease a Detroit/Sicilian style pizza pan or 12" x 18" sheet pan generously with butter. Pour 2 tablespoons of olive oil into the center of the pan. The butter gives a nice crunch and adds extra flavor to the crust.
2. Remove the dough from the fridge. Use a scraper or lightly oiled hands to shape the dough into a rough ball at the center of the bowl.
3. Turn the dough ball with the help of the scraper out into the center of the prepared pizza pan. Flip the dough ball over to coat well on both sides with the olive oil. Let rest for 3 hours. If the dough is well-oiled it doesn't need to be covered but if you're worried cover lightly with plastic wrap.
4. After the dough has rested use lightly oiled hands, to gently stretch the dough to fit the pan. Use your fingers to dimple and stretch. If you're not able to get the dough to stretch all the way to the edges, let it rest for another 30 minutes, then stretch it again using the same technique. The dough can rest in the pan for 30 minutes or up to 2 hours if your kitchen is on the cool side. Cover with plastic wrap to keep from drying out.

To Bake the Pizza

1. If you have a pizza stone, place it on a rack in the middle or lower third of your oven, and heat it to 500 degrees F.
2. Use oiled fingers to dimple only the center of the dough one last time and press deeply. It will help the dough bake more evenly.
3. Place the pan in the preheated oven on the pizza stone for 10 to 11 minutes or until golden. Remove the pan from the oven and lower the oven to 475 degrees F. Note: This par-bake can be done hours or even a day ahead of time.
4. Spread the sauce evenly over the dough. Top with the grated cheese. Sprinkle with oregano, and then chili flakes and salt to taste. Top with any or all of the toppings then drizzle with olive oil.

Note: For Detroit-style pizza, sprinkle the cheese over the crust all the way to the edges. Top with the toppings and dollop the sauce over the top. Sprinkle with oregano and chili flakes and season with salt. Drizzle with olive oil.



5. Place the pan in the oven and bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until the cheese is melted and just beginning to brown in spots.

Note: For Detroit-style pizza, bake until the cheese is browned on the edges for about 15 to 18 minutes.

6. Remove the pan from the oven and let the pizza rest for 5 minutes in the pan. Run a knife or spatula around the pan's edges. Then, carefully remove the entire pizza from the pan and transfer it to a cutting board. Cut the pizza into your desired number of squares using a serrated knife. The dough can rest in the pan for 30 minutes or up to 2 hours if your kitchen is on the cool side. Cover with plastic wrap to keep from drying out.



FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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