



# ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

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PINOT NOIR, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2019



# MUSTANGS, PLUMS AND PINOT...

by Rob Sinskey

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## ***Diversity amongst monoculture!***

One hundred years ago, the French Prune (plum in English) was the most valuable crop in Napa. The famous “Nappa” leather, produced from sheep, pig, and cowhides, was a primary industry along the riverfront, and the country was amid prohibition.

Although the first commercial winery in Napa was established in the 1800s, Napa was known for its diversified agriculture, which included grapes, wheat, prunes, nuts, and livestock. There was an old saying that you could plant anything in Napa and it would grow well.

Today, nearly 100% of Napa’s agricultural value is derived from wine grapes. On the surface, this appears to be a good thing. Grapes grow well, and they currently command top dollar compared to other crops, but this rush to “cash in” comes with side effects. Land that is not ideally suited for grapes yields mediocre wines. Different crops are forced out, and since nature abhors monocultures, pests adapt to become increasingly challenging to manage without the use of toxic chemicals. Soils become depleted, losing their ability to support large microbial populations and their capacity to sequester carbon, while too-frequent tillage releases carbon into the atmosphere.

Wilding Farm is looking back for answers to today’s issues. This 84-acre site, which includes the original Capa Vineyard, is a real-world experiment in diversification. In the middle of the courtyard stands a decrepit, scraggly 100-year-old prune tree, a totem to the past. The diversified farm itself is a work in progress, planted with a fruit orchard, raised beds of vegetables, olive orchards, bees, sheep guarded by Central Asian Shepherds, quail, goats, a steer, and a horse. The orchard rows are planted with buckwheat, and the vineyards with a mix of legumes and clover.

The natural habitat is also a large part of the farm. Groves of eucalyptus support one of the largest heron rookeries in Northern California. Duck houses float on the ponds to provide ducklings with a haven from predators. Strategically placed owl, bird, and bat boxes hang from trees and buildings, raptor roosts dot the landscape, while habitat-creating hedgerows rim the vineyards.

The latest project will be to introduce wild mustangs to clear overgrown lands and aid in fire control. These are animals that would otherwise be culled (a polite way of saying killed) by the US government as part of its grazing cattle program on Bureau of Land Management lands. The mustangs are smaller and scrappier than typical riding horses. They will eat invasive plant species, help control poison oak, and raise the canopy of trees by walking under and nibbling on them. The removal of combustible material on the ground, in combination with raising the tree canopy, will significantly reduce the risk of fire and, if a grass fire occurs, minimize the risk of the fire harming the trees. If these were not reason enough, their waste will also contribute to the health of the soil.

The better we are as farmers, the better we are at growing and making wine. We can dedicate the best plots for wine grapes and utilize the rest in a diversified, responsible manner. We have learned that if you can strike a deal with nature, she will help you if you listen to her needs.



## ***Winegrowing Notes***

Pinot Noir, if grown well and crafted in a pure, unadulterated manner, reflects the year of its birth more than any other variety. A wet winter set up the vines for an excellent spring bud break. A welcome pre-flowering rain contributed to a vitality that carried through to a nice, balanced, and above-average fruit set. To top it off, the summer was long and cool, with plenty of maritime influences. The harvest season was relaxed and extended, starting the first week of September and concluding on September 25th—a “perfect” vintage for the fickle Pinot Noir grape.

## ***Tasting Notes***

The 2019 iteration of RSVnapa’s organically farmed Los Carneros Pinot Noir is such a delicious and well-integrated wine that it’s a hard one to write about, but here goes:

A shining example of harmonious purity with an aromatic bouquet of floral notes, bright red fruit, and an undertone of earth and spice. It is a Pinot-lover’s dream, standing at the intersection of old and new worlds, which takes different paths to achieve the same philosophical goal: creating a pure, elegant, and balanced wine for today’s cuisine yet well-crafted for the ages. (06/2025)





## SIMPLY DELICIOUS

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I know most people think chefs always prefer fancy foods, but most of the time, I like to eat simply. Give me a taco, a yakitori skewer, or a grilled cheese sandwich made with great ingredients, and I'm good to go. Same goes for wine. I don't need fancy, I need it to be well-grown, well-crafted and delicious. Supply that, and I'm a happy camper.

The thing I relish in both food and wine is balance. The idea of balance is something that hits me in the head every time I have a glass of our Los Carneros Pinot Noir and hits me in the stomach when I pair it with something that's simply delicious.

I'm not calling our Los Carneros Pinot Noir simple. It's far from that. The layers of fruit and spice that evolve in the glass over the course of a meal is proof. Simply put, our Pinot is approachable, flexible and always in balance. The tacos that follow will definitely shore up my argument. They're simple, juicy and packed with flavor. The flour tortillas, unlike corn tortillas, don't get in the way of the wine, and the rich umami of the mushrooms, mixed with the juices of the chicken, are damn near perfect with the Pinot Noir.

Make a batch, open a bottle and revel in the simplicity of a well-crafted meal.

Until the next wine... *Maria*

## CHICKEN TACOS

*These tacos are simple but tasty. The quick cooking of the chicken makes the filling extra juicy. I like to enjoy these tacos simply adorned with sour cream and green onion, but you can top with cheese, salsa and shredded cabbage if you so desire. Serves 6*

1 recipe flour tortillas	4 ounces shiitake mushrooms, stems removed, thinly sliced
Expeller-pressed vegetable oil	Freshly ground black pepper
1 small yellow onion, finely diced	1 ½ pounds boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into ½ inch pieces
2 large jalapeños, seeded and finely chopped	1 teaspoon hot paprika
Kosher salt	Sliced green onions to serve
8 ounces white mushrooms, washed and sliced	Sour cream to serve
8 ounces oyster mushrooms, trimmed and cut into chunks	

1. Heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add enough vegetables to thinly cover the bottom, and then add the onion and jalapeño. Sauté, stirring occasionally until the onion is golden and the jalapeños are soft and melted, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat if the juices start sticking to the pan and burning.
2. Add the mushrooms. Stir well. Cook until the mushrooms have released their juices and season lightly with salt. Continue cooking until juices are almost dry at the bottom of the pan. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
3. Spread the chicken out in a pan or plate and season well with salt, pepper, and paprika.
4. Move the mushrooms to the side of the pan. Turn the pan heat up to high and add a splash of oil to the empty side, and then add the chicken. Stir the chicken to cook quickly.
5. When chicken is halfway cooked stir into the mushrooms and continue to cook until the chicken is cooked through, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat if the pan smokes and the mixture starts to burn. Turn the filling out into a serving bowl and cover to keep warm.
6. Heat a large skillet or griddle over high heat. Place a tortilla on the griddle to warm. Flip over and cook until the tortilla is lightly toasted.
7. Cup the warm tortilla in your hand and fill with chicken mixture. Drizzle with sour cream and sprinkle with sliced green onion. Place on a plate and repeat with remaining tortillas.

## FLOUR TORTILLAS

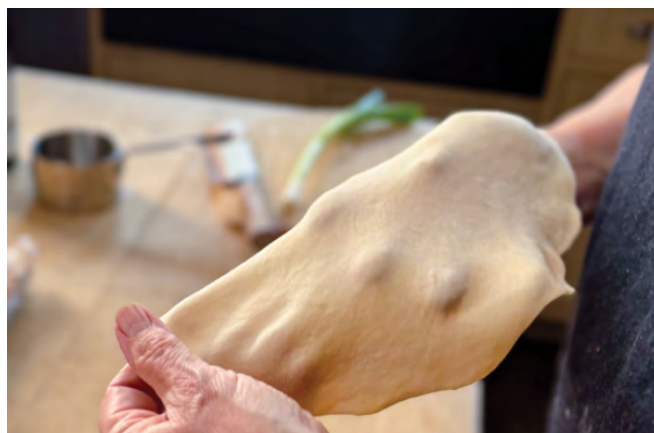
*Nothing beats a freshly made flour tortilla. They are head and shoulders above all store-bought ones, and easy to make to boot. You will need a flat griddle or cast-iron skillet for best results. Yield: 12 8" tortillas*

3 cups all-purpose flour	5 tablespoons non-hydrogenated vegetable shortening or lard
2 teaspoons baking powder	1 cup warm water plus 1-2 tablespoons more
1 teaspoon kosher salt	

1. In large bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder and salt.
2. Add the vegetable shortening or lard, or use a combination of half lard, half shortening. Use a fork or a pastry cutter to cut in the shortening, or just do it the old-fashioned way and use your hands.
3. Add the water a little at a time until the dough is soft but not sticky. If the water is too hot it will melt the fat into the flour, so keep it just warm to the touch. Knead the dough for a few minutes.



4. Divide the dough into 14 equal pieces and roll it into balls. Place the balls on a tray, sprinkle lightly with flour, and cover with plastic wrap. Let them rest for at least 10 minutes and up to 2 hours.
5. Heat a heavy-bottomed 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat or use a griddle. Lightly grease the pan and wipe out the excess fat. You only need to do this for the first tortilla.
6. Dust the balls, one at a time, with flour and flatten them with a rolling pin at their center. Roll into a very thin 8-inch circle, rolling from the center out. Lift the dough and turn it as you roll to keep it from becoming cemented to the counter. Do not be concerned if it is not a perfect circle. You will get better as you roll. Besides, the tortillas look rustic and handmade when they are slightly misshapen.
7. Spread your fingers as wide as they will go, palm facing up and lay the tortilla across your hand. Quickly turn your hand over and flop the tortilla into the pan. Quickly smooth out any wrinkle so the tortilla is flat against the bottom of the pan. Cook for a few seconds then flip over. The tortillas will puff slightly and will be flecked with brown spots from the heat. Remove the tortillas to a napkin-lined basket and cover them to keep them warm and pliable. If they cool and become stiff, rewarm them in the pan. Cooled tortillas can be placed in a zip lock bag and stored in the refrigerator for later use. Use within 2 to 3 days.





## FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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