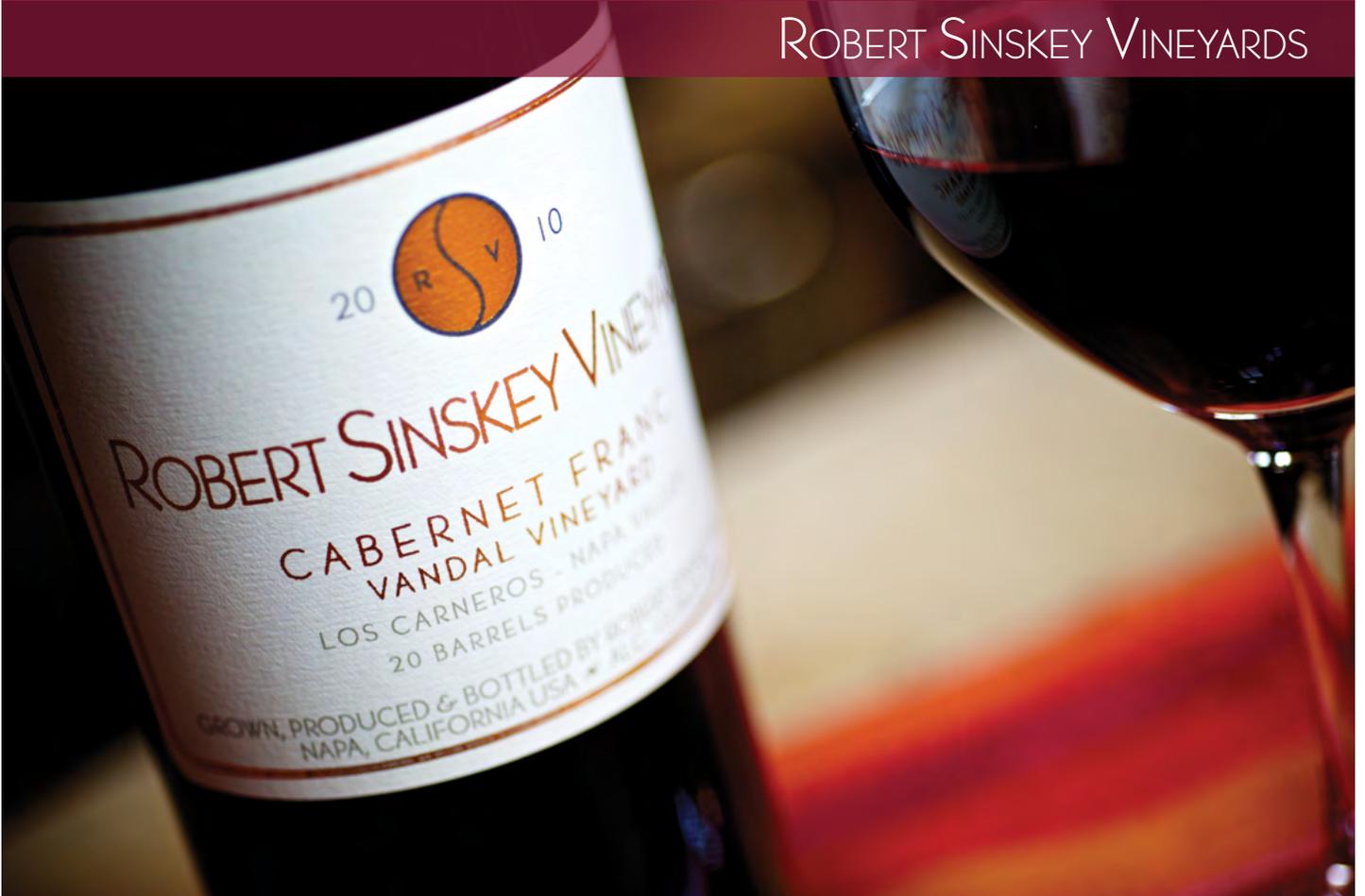




CABERNET FRANC, VANDAL VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY, 2010

ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS





about nothing and everything!

I feel like a hypocrite. I talk about doing the right thing by trying to farm and conduct my business in a carbon neutral manner, yet I am writing this while flying at 35,000 feet. Then, on the home front, my kids attend school in San Francisco, belching hours of extra carbon into the atmosphere with each round trip.

I know that my actions run counter to my beliefs, yet I refuse to give up opportunity and my children's education in exchange for a smaller footprint... but what option do we really have? We could home school our kids and live a hippie dream. We could retreat from the marketplace and only sell locally – but what would happen to our employees and our business? As romantic as it might seem to live and farm as if it were another era, we can't turn back the clock. Our only choice is to accept empirical evidence, evolve and deploy technologies that not only allow us to live in the way we are accustomed, but do no harm in the process. The genie is out of the bottle and the only way forward is to learn from the past and embrace the future.

I wish we had electric high speed trains in this country – and a supporting network of local rail. I wouldn't hesitate to park my car and get on-board. This is a technology that works well in Europe, Japan, and many other countries, yet the stateside version is archaic and dysfunctional. I really don't know why it is not a matter of national pride to have the best rail system in the world. We should demand it... it needs to be greenlighted, even if it takes decades to build.

Energy needs to be sustainable, renewable and carbon neutral. Though it should be a matter of national security to ween ourselves of fossil fuel, it should also be a public health priority. Right now, oil drives the world economy and we fear what might happen to our economy if we disrupt the system. Yes, it would change... and we might find a system that is more equitable. If you think about it, the way our fossil fuel energy systems are structured, it really relies on deferred taxation. We, not the energy producers, pay the cost of the environmental degradation after the fact. We also deal with health issues and lower quality of life. I hate taxation as much as anyone but I also hate to see the damage being done by cheap

fuel. If a carbon tax could be implemented, one that would fund the research and deployment of new, clean energy systems, it might be a good thing for everyone except the oil companies.

We need to support the dreamers. There are several new technologies in the pipeline that are trying to save the world - that is, if they can get established. Like any other disruptive tech, there are lots of people who are afraid of the future and want to kill off the competition before it gets a toehold. Electric cars are no longer fringe, though the naysayers do try to marginalize them. They aren't perfect but they are getting better with each incarnation. Those with discretionary income should vote with their pocketbook and become early adopters so investors and corporate executives see the future, improve the tech, develop an infrastructure, and lower the cost so they eventually become mainstream.

I live in the Bay Area where I've seen the future and it is beautiful and weird! I've not only witnessed the interesting characters inhabiting the city but I've seen the Google auto-piloted car cross the Golden Gate Bridge a couple of times and all I can say is, WOW! Just think, no-driver... it just goes where you want to go. Now, combine that with the above mentioned electric car and you have a near silent, clean, collision free form of transportation. You can work, create or just plain daydream while you commute. No more dodging lane changers, no more white knuckles or road rage... and after that dinner, when you know you've overindulged a little too much, you don't have to take the wheel.

What does all this have to do with wine? Nothing... and everything! If climate models are correct, we'll have bigger problems than what grapes to plant. My business relies on the natural rhythms of nature. Grapes, particularly Cabernet Franc with its narrow comfort zone, will be an early indicator of that change. Though they might continue to produce fruit, they will no longer be able to create the elegant, vibrant style of wine we have been producing for nearly thirty years. Our way of life is at stake, but my concern is with the health of agriculture in general and what it may mean to everyone's way of life if we don't take responsibility.

Wine Growing Notes

The vintage of 2010 was anything but a cake walk. Some would suggest we are beginning to see the symptoms of climate change. March and April saw close to 3 inches of rain. It was unseasonably cool with temperatures rarely exceeding 75F into August. A big concern for growers was increased mildew and botrytis pressure; some growers aggressively leafed their vine's fruit zones in an attempt to enhance light and air circulation. Unfortunately, this was a bad call as the cool weather changed abruptly in the last week of August and spiked to 108 F for three days. Beyond scorching exposed fruit, the ambient air temperature actually cooked the grapes! But what fruit remained was carefully thinned, leaving a small crop of high quality.

The Cabernet Franc vines on RSV's organically farmed Vandal Vineyard in the foothills of the "Right Bank" of Napa (otherwise known as northern Carneros), are low vigor vines that are accustomed to stress. The heat spike had little effect on these blocks and the over all cool vintage allowed for quintessential ripeness. The lots selected for this cuvee were picked between October 6 through 20.

Wine Tasting Notes

A dark, almost opaque wine in the glass that is equally brooding to the nose as dark cherry/plum and berry co-mingle with rain-soaked forest floor. The flavors speak in a French accent - deep and seductive notes of berry, plum, a hint of graphite, cocoa dust and violets. A persistent yet elegant structure adds to the allure.



HOLY MOLE!

A good Mole is neither sweet nor bitter, but rather seductive and silky. Mole is considered a poor partner for wine but, when done right, the deep flavors balance the heat from the chilies and the result is electrifying. The key is restraint. A drizzle of Mole over tender shredded pork or turkey serves wine far better than a smother.

This mole is spot on with RSV's Cabernet Franc. The wine, like the sauce, is deeply flavored and seductive in texture and weight. Dark berry fruit, plum, a hint of graphite, cocoa dust and violets is supported by restrained velvety tannins with just a hint of grip in the finish. All a reflection of the true varietal character is found in this exceptional bottling.

Until the Next Wine....

Maria

P.S. Mexican Chocolate Butter Cake isn't meant to go with the wine, but life's too short to skip dessert.

MOLE

Take care not to burn any of the ingredients when toasting or your sauce will have a bitter edge. When in doubt, less toast is better than too much. Find the freshest dried chilies by confirming with your grocer that they are from the most recent harvest. Good chilies will have some flexibility without being hard and brittle. Most communities have small Mexican markets that have high turnover. Make 2 quarts

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns	1 medium yellow onion, coarsely chopped
4 ancho chilis, destemmed and deseeded, seeds reserved	6 large garlic cloves, smashed
3 tablespoons sesame seeds	2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1/4 cup raw cashews, crushed lightly	1 lb (about 6) roma tomatoes, cored and cut into quarters
1/4 cup sliced almonds	1/2 cup raisins
1 4-inch long cinnamon stick, crumbled	Kosher salt
5 New Mexican chilis, destemmed and deseeded	1 cup chicken stock
2 Guajillo chilis, destemmed and deseeded	8 cups water
3 chipotle chilis, destemmed and deseeded	2 tablets (2.7 oz.) Mexican chocolate
1/2 cup cold-pressed canola or safflower oil	1 small corn tortilla, torn into small pieces

1. Heat a cast iron pan over medium heat. When the pan is hot add the peppercorns, ancho chili seeds, sesame and cashews and toast until they become fragrant and lightly golden. Remove from pan and reserve in a medium bowl.
2. Add the almonds and cinnamon to the pan and toast until the almonds are golden and the cinnamon is fragrant. Add to bowl with seeds.
3. Add the chilies to the pan a few at a time and toast until aromatic and crisp on edges but not burned. Add them to the bowl with the other toasted ingredients.
4. Heat a large sauce pan over medium high heat. Add the oil and then the onion and garlic. Cook until the onions are golden. Sprinkle sugar over and cook until sugar is dissolved.
5. Add the tomatoes and raisins and continue to cook, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until the tomatoes are broken down and bubbling thickly, season to taste with salt. Add the reserved bowl of seeds, spices and chilies.
6. Add the stock and water and bring to a boil. Add the chocolate and the tortilla and stir. Return to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 30 minutes stirring occasionally. Cool and blend in a blender until smooth. Strain and place back on the heat. Cook for another 20 minutes or so until thickened. Serve over pulled pork shoulder or shredded turkey or chicken.

BRAISED TURKEY THIGHS

Turkey is one of the traditional meats used for mole. I prefer the moistness and flavor of thigh meat. You can also braise whole legs if you prefer. Serves 4 to 6

2 large turkey thighs

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed

1 large celery stalk, trimmed and chopped

1 medium carrot, peeled and chopped

1/2 large yellow onion, chopped

4 cups white wine

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Season the turkey well with salt and pepper.
3. Heat a Dutch oven over medium high heat. Add the thighs skin side down and cook until the thigh releases from the pan and the skin is crisp. Turn over and repeat on the other side.
4. Add the vegetables and cook until soft and golden, about 5 minutes, season with salt and pepper. Reduce the heat if the pan gets too hot and juices start to burn.
5. Add the wine to the pan and bring to a boil. Cover and place in the preheated oven. Braise for 2 1/2 hours until the thigh meat pulls apart easily and are meltingly tender. Check pan periodically to make sure the liquid hasn't evaporated and left the pan dry. Add more water, 1/4 cup at a time, if necessary.
6. Cool the turkey in the juices until it can be handled. Remove the thighs from the pan and place them on a plate. Strain the juices into a smaller pan and skim the fat from the top.
7. Pull the meat from the bone and shred. Moisten with a little of the braising juices. Reserve the remaining juice for another dish. The shredded meat can be placed in the juices and frozen for later use.

BRAISED PORK

Serves 6 to 8

3-4 pounds boneless pork shoulder

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

4 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed

1 large celery stalk, trimmed and chopped

1 medium carrot, chopped

1/2 large yellow onion, chopped

4 cups white wine

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Season the pork well with salt and pepper.
3. Heat a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the shoulder fat side down and cook until the meat releases from the pan and the fat is rendered and golden. Turn over and repeat on the other side.
4. Add the vegetables and cook until soft and golden, about 5 minutes, season with salt and pepper. Reduce the heat if the pan gets too hot and juices start to burn.
5. Add the wine and bring to a boil. Cover and place in the preheated oven. Braise for 4 hours until the meat pulls apart easily and is meltingly tender. Check pan periodically to make sure the liquid hasn't evaporated and left the pan dry. Add more water, 1/4 cup at a time, if necessary.
6. Cool the pork in the juices until it can be handled. Remove the meat from the pan and place it on a plate. Strain the juices into a smaller pan and skim the fat from the top.
7. Shred the meat. Moisten with some of the braising juices. Reserve the remaining juice for another dish. The shredded meat can be placed in the juices and frozen for later use.





MEXICAN CHOCOLATE BUTTER CAKE

This cake gets better as it sits. Bake it the day before serving for best results. Take care not to over bake. Remove the cake from the oven when a toothpick comes out not quite clean. Serve with barely sweetened softly whipped cream and shaved chocolate. Yield: 1 bundt cake

1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
plus more for dusting pan
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons KOSHER salt
2/3 cup buttermilk, room temp

1/3 cup strong coffee, room temp
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, room temp
2 cups light brown sugar
1 cup granulated sugar
6 large eggs, at room temp
2 disks (2.7 ounces) Mexican Chocolate, melted

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and cocoa powder a 10-inch 12-cup bundt pan.
2. Sift together the flour, cocoa powder, cinnamon, baking powder and salt into a large bowl. Reserve.
3. Whisk together the buttermilk, coffee and vanilla extract. Reserve.
4. Place the butter and sugars in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment and beat until smooth and creamy.
5. Add the eggs, two at a time, beating well after each addition. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and beat one last time.
6. Beat in the melted chocolate until incorporated.
7. Add half the flour mixture and beat briefly, then stir in the buttermilk mixture.
8. Scrape down sides of the bowl and add remaining flour mixture. Beat well for 20 seconds.
9. Remove the bowl from the mixer and make sure the batter is uniform by folding the batter from the bottom of the bowl over the top. Keep folding until the batter is uniform.
10. Spoon the batter into prepared pan. Transfer to oven and bake until cake pulls away from the sides, and tester comes out NOT QUITE clean, about 1 hour 10 minutes.
11. Cool for 20 minutes in pan, then invert on rack. Cool to room temperature.



FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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