

ABRAXAS
SCINTILLA SONOMA VINEYARD
2008



ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS
R S V
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

SCINTILLA!

A spark of an idea...

Great, therefore I drink. Food fuels the desire for wine. Rarely do I think of wine as a self-contained cocktail or an end unto itself. A wine must fit the table just as the grapes must fit the place.

When we decide to make a new wine, we look to the table for inspiration. Maria and I have always been fond of the cuisine and wines of Alsace. Long before we married, she worked a *stage* at the Michelin three star Au Crocodile in Strasbourg with the inspirational chef, Émile Jung, and later charmed, perhaps even seduced me with her renditions of tart flambe and choucroute garni. Back then, the only white wine we made was a very Burgundian style Chardonnay (barrel fermented, sur lie, with bright acidity); a delicious wine, but not the best pairing for this type of cuisine.

When Maria cooked Alsatian dishes, we would marvel at how well the regional wines paired with the dishes. I would leave the meal fantasizing about planting one of the classic grapes of Alsace, but I worried that the climate of our existing vineyards would not allow the wine to have the classic structure I so admired.

I feared that if we planted Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewurztraminer or Pinot Blanc, we might have difficulty maintaining the natural acidity and minerality that make Alsatian wines so consistently distinctive and

cuisine friendly. The cooler vintages would not be a problem, but the warmer ones could be, and I did not want to delve into the winemakers toolbox to ‘fix’ the wines once they reached the cellar. I wanted a wine that was pure, naturally balanced and reflected the place it was grown.

Then I met an Alsatian winemaker who eschewed varietal labeling and instead made a wine he called a “Vin de Terroir.” Instead of a single variety, his wines were of a single place, blending several complimentary varieties appropriate for the site. Steel struck flint. I now knew we could do this in Carneros. We just needed to find the right piece of land.

Just over the Napa County line, a stone’s throw from the San Pablo Bay on the Sonoma side of the Carneros region, I found a horse boarding facility for sale, but it was just too small for an efficient vineyard. So I went next door and asked the neighbor if he wanted to sell. I think I was just as surprised as anyone when he said, “Sure!”

We named it the “Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard” referring to that “spark of an idea” and the fact that we would be making a small amount of a wine named Abraxas. I now have a wine for Maria’s cuisine ... and hopefully yours as well.

(Rob Sinskey)



WINEGROWING NOTES

The vintage shapes Abraxas. Appropriately, if you apply isopsephy (the Grecian practice of adding up the number values of the letters in a word) to the Greek letters of Abraxas, Αβρααξ, the sum is 365. In ancient times, the Basilideans believed that Abraxas ruled the 365 heavens, each one with its lesser god and a virtue for every day of the year. In later years, the name morphed into the magic word, Abracadabra.

Abraxas is a salute to distinctiveness and a reaction against homogeneity. Born of the idea that four classic grapes of Alsace (Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Blanc), planted in RSV's Organic and Biodynamic Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard, would respond distinctly to the unique weather patterns of each year. Then, the four varieties could be blended, in ratios determined by each variety's unique response to the vintage, making the wine whole while avoiding the manipulations often found in a more industrialized cellar. Abraxas does not aspire to be anything but true to vintage.



TASTING NOTES:

Scintillating Abraxas shines a pure, vibrant flaxen hue. Effusive aromas suggest citrus notes of Rangpur lime and Meyer lemon, layered with floral hints of honeysuckle, magnolia flower and spice. The aromas foreshadow lingering flavors of crisp nectarine, pear and meyer lemon overlaying exotic spice, floral musk and a subtle, but pervasive minerality. Abraxas' commanding texture and bright, fresh citrus edge refresh the palate and make the wine an amenable dinner companion.

(Eric Sothern)



Certified Organic Vineyards, Biodynamically Farmed

PORTABLE GLUTTON...

Recipes for a memorable picnic

Picnics can occur any time of the year. They are, after all, just portable meals with a festive air. Abraxas is a wonderful grab and go wine for a picnic. The glass stopper alleviates the need for a corkscrew, and its aromatic fruit and lively acidity makes it the perfect quaffer for all types of cured meats, sausages, cheeses and picnic salads.

Saucisson Sec from Fatted Calf is absolutely wonderful with Abraxas. Taylor Boetticher, proprietor of this small artisanal shop, handcrafted these small sticks of delight, using Abraxas in the recipe. They are extremely addictive. You won't find these Saucisson Sec anywhere except Napa Valley. The Fatted Calf keeps things local and will not ship to other locales. Next time you visit Napa, stop by the Fatted Calf in the Oxbow Market. It is a gourmand's dream, especially if you're into all things pork and duck.

Until the next wine...Maria





Like to get into the spirit of a picnic by using a large straw basket packed with all the accoutrements for a hedonistic outing... even if you're just venturing into the back yard. Pack a large tablecloth in addition to a blanket so that the food items can have a proper canvas. Use cloth napkins and flatware for a luxurious touch. Sturdy bamboo or other reusable firm plates are a must to keep food from flopping all over. I prefer French bistro glasses for wine. They are difficult to break and are much more enjoyable than plastic for drinking fine wine. Just remember, a picnic is not a picnic unless you have too much food and wine. Here is a substantial list of provisions for you next portable feast:

Selection of Charcuterie/Salumi

Good chunk of Pate

3 Cheeses or more – soft, hard, stinky or blue

Fresh fruit in season

Olives & Cornichon

Raw or toasted Almonds

Good Baguette or Ciabatta Bread

Home made Crackers, Recipe Follows

Hearty Mustard

Alsation Potato Salad, Recipe Follows

Sweet and Spicy Carrot Salad, Recipe Follows

Several chilled bottles of Abraxas

HOMEMADE OLIVE OIL AND SEA SALT CRACKERS

These crisp, light crackers are delicious on their own, topped with cured meats, slathered with cheese or plunged into dips.

(Enough crackers for 20 people)



1 cup warm water
1 tablespoon yeast
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons kosher salt
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
Extra virgin olive oil
Fleur de Sel or kosher salt for sprinkling
Semolina for dusting sheet pans

1. Place the warm water in a small bowl. Sprinkle the yeast evenly over the top of the water and allow it to “bloom” for 5 minutes. Whisk it into the water until smooth.
2. Place the flour and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer. Make a well in the flour and pour in the yeast. Knead with the dough hook until the dough is roughly combined and then add the soft butter. Knead until the dough is very smooth, about 5 minutes. You can also hand knead the dough.
3. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place in a warm corner of the kitchen to rise. Let the dough rise for 1 1/2 hours until doubled. Punch the dough down and divide into 3 pieces. Cover the pieces of dough with plastic wrap to keep moist.
4. Preheat the oven to 475 degrees F.
5. Remove one section of dough from the wrap and roll thinly with a rolling pin on an un-floured counter. Lift the dough and turn it over to get it really thin. Brush the dough lightly with olive oil and then sprinkle very lightly with salt. Prick well with a fork.
6. Use a knife to cut into any size and shape you wish. Sprinkle a sheet pan very lightly with semolina and place the cut crackers on top. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, turning the pan once until the crackers have bubbled and are golden on the edges.
7. Cool before storing in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.



ALSATIAN STYLE POTATO SALAD

The caraway seeds and bacon in this salad makes it sing with the Abraxas. Adjust the tanginess by adding or subtracting vinegar and olive oil measures.

(Serves 6 to 8)

2 pounds Yukon Gold or other waxy potato, boiled to tender and peeled

1 large garlic clove, pressed

1/2 teaspoon caraway seeds

4 slices (4 ounces) Bacon, cooked and finely crumbled

1/4 cup red wine vinegar

1/2 teaspoon sugar

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or more to taste

Flat leaf parsley leaves to garnish

1. Cut the potatoes into fork-sized chunks and place in a large bowl. Add the garlic, caraway seeds, bacon, vinegar and sugar. Toss well.
2. Season to taste with salt and pepper and then toss again. Add the olive oil, toss and taste for seasoning. Add more olive oil or vinegar to adjust tang. Garnish with Parsley leaves.
3. Let the potato salad sit for 20 minutes at room temperature before serving to allow the flavors to marry. Store in the refrigerator, tightly covered, for up to 3 days.





SWEET AND SPICY CARROT SALAD

Select sweet and juicy carrots for the best success with this salad. It is a great foil to the salty, savory items in your feast.

(Serves 6 to 8)

3 teaspoons minced shallots

2 tablespoons Dijon Mustard

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt plus more to taste

1/2 teaspoon sugar

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

Freshly ground black pepper

2 pounds carrots, peeled and shredded

2 tablespoons chopped flat leaf parsley

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the shallots, mustard, 1/2 teaspoon salt, sugar, white wine vinegar and a few grinds of black pepper. Add the carrots and parsley and toss well. Taste for seasoning and adjust.
2. Add the olive oil and toss again. Adjust the tanginess by adding more vinegar or olive oil depending on your taste. Let the salad sit for 20 minutes and readjust seasoning. Toss well before serving to combine the juices that have settled in the bottom.
3. Store for up to 3 days, well covered, in the refrigerator.

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