



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

MARCIEN, PROPRIETARY RED, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY, 2011



A Moderate voice in the age of extremism!

Wine has become a two party system. On the right, you have the Trump-like extremists who believe wine should be big, ripe and in your face with a “give me 100 points or get off the stage” attitude. On the other side, you have the Sanders-like leftists who say rich, ripe wines are for the 1%, arguing that we must redistribute wine lists to give under-ripe grapes (that produce high acid, low alcohol beverages) a leg up.

Where did the moderates go... the ones who espouse balance, optimal ripeness, age worthiness and cuisine orientation? We, of the independent wine party, never left. It’s just that our voice has been temporarily drowned out by the sound bites of the extremists.

It is no mystery why the 100 point system was so effective. To provide a definitive number to a wine removes the mystery of buying a bottle. This wine is better than that wine because it received more points. Done deal - no argument - you have a third party endorsement to back up your purchase. The downside is that winemakers become tempted to manipulate their wine to create a pre-determined style that tends to garner higher points. It is a simple formula - pick over-ripe, use obvious amounts of expensive oak, make sure the wine is sweet, rich and stands out in a blind tasting.

The other party has a one note message: pick under-ripe grapes for lower alcohol wines. They only recognize wines that are lean and mean, sometimes sacrificing flavor in favor of their lower alcohol dogmatic platform.

I propose a third party. Let’s call it the classic or traditionalist party. We have a moderate platform with the belief that wine is created in the field and elevated in the cellar. Unlike our rivals on the right, we believe in picking our fruit at the optimal intersection of physiological (flavor) and sugar ripeness. And, unlike our compatriots on the left, we believe that if you plant the correct variety, rootstock and selection in the right environment, it will achieve optimal flavor ripeness while maintaining bright acidity and moderate alcohol without the need to pick under ripe.

Please, for the future of elegant, cuisine oriented wines, return the moderates to power! Vote for elegance. Vote for balance. Vote for flavor. A vote for Marcien is a vote for the future of wine.



Winegrowing Notes

You can't fight mother nature. In fact, you need to embrace the eccentricities of nature — as weather and climate define the character of the vintage. The winter of 2011 was wet with 130% of normal rain. A cooler than normal spring delayed bloom and reduced fruit set.

With late spring and early summer rains, cover crops were left growing in the field longer, wicking away moisture and throttling back vine vigor. The sheep gorged on lush cover crops until bud break, then the cover was mowed with minimal, if any, spading of the vine rows. If these actions did not control vine vigor completely, selective leaf pulling allowed an increase of sunlight on the fruit and enhanced air circulation.

It helped to not have a rigid mind set with a vintage like 2011. If you were fixated on making a big, powerful wine, you were destined for failure. If, however, you were more interested in expressing terroir, you embraced the vagaries of the vintage to create an elegant, flavorful, balanced and age-worthy wine.

Tasting Notes

The Marcien from 2011 is an elegant alien among over-the-top natives. Barrel select Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, grown in RSV's organic, CCOF certified Carneros vineyards, is blended to create a cuvée that could easily be described as a "Right Bank" of Napa Valley wine.

The color is a deep purple with a garnet rim. The aromas and flavors are intense and complex, with notes of bramble-berry, cassis, a touch of bayleaf or capsicum backed by spice (cardamom, nutmeg and cinnamon) and cocoa nibs. The mouthwatering finish is long and bright with just enough tannin to suggest this wine will be around for the long haul.



A FRAGRANT FLAKE

Who doesn't love a warm, flaky pastry stuffed with a favorite fragrant ingredient?

It seems as though every culture has a version of a meat pie - the empanada from Mexico, piroshki from Eastern Europe and the simply named meat pie from Down Under where they reign supreme at every Aussie road stop or quick market. Meat pies can be a snack or a meal and they don't necessarily have to contain meat. The point of these small pies is to satisfy your hunger in a portable manner.

Marcien is a noble wine of delicious, fragrant complexity (just read the tasting notes). While it would fit beautifully at the table with a fine roast duck or standing rib, I wanted to take it to the land of the meat pie to show it has the versatility to hang with the casual folks.

I threw in the tuiles because I love them in their elegant simplicity and their salty, nutty perfection. They'll go with just about any wine but are particularly delicious with the Marcien. They're a perfect quick hunger fix to nibble on while sipping Marcien as the pies bake.

Until the Next Wine....

Maria

PARMESAN TUILES

Lacy, golden, crunchy, nutty, salty, delicate parmesan tuiles are delicious with a wide range of wines both white and red. To make smaller tuiles, use half the amount of cheese for each round. Yield: 8 large 6-inch tuiles

4 ounces finely shredded Parmesan

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Prepare a wine bottle or metal thermos to shape the tuiles when they're hot from the oven.
2. Line a ½ sheet pan with parchment paper or Silpat mat. Visually divide the sheet pan into 4 quarters.
3. Take ¼ cup of cheese (½ ounce) and make a pile in the center of 1 of the quarters.
Repeat with the remaining 3 quarters.
4. Use your fingers to spread the pile of cheese into a 3-inch round of even thickness.
5. Bake in the oven for about 15 minutes until cheese is melted and form a large golden lacy round.
6. Remove pan from oven and quickly use a metal spatula to transfer the rounds to the wine bottle to gently shape into a curved tuile. If cheese hardens before it is curved, place back on the sheet pan and rewarm in the oven for a few minutes, then try again.
7. Cool and serve immediately or store in an airtight container for 1 day.

PIMENTON BEEF AND POTATO PIE

Yield: 10 round 4-inch pies

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 small rib celery, finely diced

½ cup finely diced yellow onion

1 large carrot, finely diced

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 large Yukon gold potato, peeled and ¼ inch diced

1 teaspoon minced garlic

1 pound ground beef

½ pound ground pork

2 teaspoons spicy pimenton

2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley

1 recipe pâte brisée dough, recipe follows

Egg wash: 1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon cool water

1. Heat a large 12-inch sauté pan over medium high heat.
2. Add the olive oil to the pan, then the celery, onion, and carrot. Cook until the vegetables are tender and starting to caramelize, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the potatoes and cook until they are tender, about 7 minutes. Stir occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Add the garlic and then crumble the meat into the pan. Sauté until meat is cooked through, about 7 to 10 minutes. Add the pimenton and then season to taste with salt. Drain off any excess fat.
5. Fold in the parsley and pour the filling onto a plate or sheet pan to cool in the refrigerator.
6. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
7. Roll the brisée dough ⅛ inch thick and cut into 20 5-inch rounds. Layer the rounds on a sheet tray with parchment paper in between. Chill for 15 minutes after rolling.
8. Lay out 10 rounds. Top each with ⅓ cup of the filling. Brush the edge of the dough lightly with egg wash then top with another round.
9. Press edges together then roll the bottom edge over the top edge and crimp with fork or fingers. Place on a parchment paper or Silpat mat lined sheet pan. Decorate the tops with dough scraps and use a sharp knife to cut small slits in the dough to let the steam escape.
10. Place pies in the oven and bake for 30-40 minutes until the pies are puffed and golden. Cool for 10 minutes before serving to allow the filling to cool slightly. Caution filling may be hot!

FENNEL, ROSEMARY, GREEN OLIVE, AND LAMB PIE

Yield: 10 round 4-inch pies

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
½ cup finely diced yellow onion
1 teaspoon minced garlic
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 pound ground lamb

½ pound ground pork
½ teaspoon ground fennel seed
½ teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
¼ cup finely chopped pitted Picholine or Lucque olives
1 recipe pâte brisée dough, recipe follows
Egg wash: 1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon cool water

1. Heat a large 12-inch sauté pan over medium high heat.
2. Add the olive oil to the pan, then the onion and garlic. Cook until the onion is tender and starting to caramelize about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Crumble the meat into the pan. Sauté until meat is cooked through, about 7 to 10 minutes. Add the fennel seed, rosemary, and olives. Stir well and then season to taste with salt and pepper. Drain off any excess fat.
4. Pour the filling onto a plate or sheet pan to cool in the refrigerator.
5. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
6. Roll the brisée dough ⅛ inch thick and cut into 20 5-inch rounds. Layer the rounds on a sheet tray with parchment paper in between. Chill for 15 minutes after rolling.
7. Lay out 10 rounds. Top each with ⅓ cup of the filling. Brush the edge of the dough lightly with egg wash then top with another round.
8. Press edges together then roll the bottom edge over the top edge and crimp with fork or fingers. Place on a parchment paper or Silpat mat lined sheet pan. Decorate the tops with dough scraps and use a sharp knife to cut small slits in the dough to let the steam escape.
9. Place pies in the oven and bake for 30-40 minutes until the pies are puffed and golden. Cool for 10 minutes before serving to allow the filling to cool slightly. Caution filling may be hot!

SMOKEY MUSHROOM AND POTATO PIE

Yield: 6 half-moon 5-inch pies

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
½ cup finely diced yellow onion
½ cup finely diced leeks
1 teaspoon minced garlic
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

2 medium Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and ¼-inch diced
½ pound white or Cremini mushrooms, sliced thinly
1 teaspoon sweet pimenton
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
1 recipe pâte brisée dough, recipe follows
Egg wash: 1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon cool water

1. Heat a large 12-inch sauté pan over medium high heat.
2. Add the olive oil to the pan, then the onion, leeks, and garlic. Cook until the vegetables are tender and starting to caramelize, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Add the potatoes and cook until they are tender, about 7 minutes. Stir occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Add the mushrooms. Sauté until the mushrooms are golden and the pan juices are almost dry about 10 minutes. Add the pimenton and parsley and then season to taste with salt.
5. Pour the filling onto a plate or sheet pan to cool in the refrigerator.

6. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.
7. Roll the brisée dough $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick and cut into 6 6-inch rounds. Layer the rounds on a sheet tray with parchment paper in between. Chill for 15 minutes after rolling.
8. Lay out the rounds. Top each with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the filling. Brush the edge of half the round lightly with egg wash then fold over. Press edges together then crimp with fork or fingers.
9. Place on a parchment paper or Silpat mat lined sheet pan. Decorate the tops with dough scraps and use a sharp knife to cut small slits in the dough to let the steam escape.
10. Place pies in the oven and bake for 30-40 minutes until the pies are puffed and golden. Cool for 10 minutes before serving to allow the filling to cool slightly. Caution filling may be hot!

PÂTE BRISÉE DOUGH

Yield: Enough dough for one 2 crust pie

2½ cups all-purpose flour

1½ teaspoons salt

10 ounces (2½ sticks) unsalted butter

1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

7 tablespoons ice water

1. Combine the flour and the salt in the bowl of a standing mixer.
2. Add the butter and mix with a paddle or by hand with a pastry cutter until it is the size of small peas.
3. Add the vinegar and then start adding the water gradually and mix until the dough starts to come together. Add only enough water to bring the dough together. The dough should be moist but it will not be completely uniform and its texture will be slightly crumbly.
4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Press it together gently to form a flat 1-inch thick patty and wrap it tightly with wax paper or plastic wrap. Let it rest in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes before rolling to firm up the butter and allow the dough to relax. The dough can be made ahead and frozen for up to three month well wrapped. Thaw in the refrigerator before rolling out.

Note: All pies can be made ahead and then frozen before baking. To bake from frozen, preheat oven to 400 degrees F, egg wash frozen pies and then bake for 50-60 minutes until golden. Reduce heat to 375 degrees F if pies brown too quickly before filling is piping hot - 140 degrees F. Test with instant read thermometer.





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

Robert Sinskey Vineyards
6320 Silverado Trail
Napa, CA 94558
707.944.9090
robertsinskey.com

Winemaker: Jeff Virnig
Chef: Maria Helm Sinskey
Photos and Text: Rob Sinskey
Vineyard Manager: Debby Zygielbaum
gluttons@robertsinskey.com

