



*FOOT 2006*

*Robert Linskey*

# ONE MAN'S POINT OF VIEW

creates a movement to improve the world through farming.

By Rob Sinskey

The father of Biodynamic agriculture was not a farmer - but during twelve days in 1924, he had the audacity to teach farmers how to tend their land.

Though Rudolph Steiner grew up in an agrarian society and tended animals as part of his daily chores, he showed little interest in farming. Instead, the young über student studied philosophy and the natural sciences, earning a scholarship to the university, where he rounded out his education to include all scientific disciplines and the humanities.

During a life that spanned from 1861 to 1925, Rudolph Steiner witnessed the most dramatic period of industrialization and destruction the world had yet seen. Against this backdrop, he combined the many diverse elements of his education with his innate understanding of human nature to create a new discipline he called anthroposophy.

Steiner developed anthroposophy as a holistic belief system to unite science, philosophy, the arts and spirituality using what he described as “introspective observation following the methods of Natural Science.” He did not set out to change agriculture, but his knack for observing and understanding interrelationships in

all things, particularly where the physical world and the spirit of humankind interface, would ultimately lead back to the farm in the form of biodynamic agriculture.

Anthropologic history repeatedly shows us that the intersection of the human spirit and nature is a dangerous place. Collisions are inevitable when humans try to not only conquer nature, but humanity itself. With the open wounds of WWI in evidence and the dark cloud of fascism gathering over Europe, it is hard to believe Steiner remained optimistic with such evidence of humans as a corrosive force. Perhaps these events, and his belief in the power of the human spirit, provided the impetus to apply the insights of anthroposophy to an agriculture course that could teach farmers how to participate in creating a better world.

Industrialized postwar Europe gave rise to a paradigm shift the agrarian world had never seen. Chemicals used to create bombs found new applications on farms as synthetic fertilizers. Weaponized neurotoxins were repurposed as insecticides and heavy equipment replaced man and horse. Farmers became emancipated from nature as they grew more dependent on equipment and



chemicals. It was necessary to implement more frequent crop rotations with new and improved seed stocks to stay one step ahead of the increasing cycles of pestilence and blight. Then, there was the grumbling. A growing chorus of complaints could be heard as the people witnessed the progressive decline in the quality and health of produce and livestock. Humans lost the rhythm in their dance with nature and were depleting the natural world faster than it could replenish itself.



According to Steiner, humankind could no longer be a spectator to evolution. Through ignorance, humans had the potential to fall victim to evolution; whereas through knowledge of self and the powers of observation, humanity had the potential to play an active, positive role in evolution- the role of healer.

Steiner was not concerned with agriculture per se, but with the development and evolution of humankind. Without proper nutrition, humans were left dealing with problems of health and spirit. Herr Steiner's understanding of interrelationships dictated that humanity could not reach full potential without solid nutrition to feed the body and soul.

Thus, biodynamics was born, not to make a better wine, but to create sound agricultural practices to heal the earth and play an active role in the evolution of humankind.

It is ironic that Steiner developed biodynamic agriculture for the benefit of all when the average consumer is not willing or able to pay for the enriched quality biodynamic farming provides. Except for fine wine and a few other artisanal products, the economics of most staple agricultural items do not support the labor-intensive aspects of biodynamic farming, thus

biodynamic farms feed not the masses, but the few who seek out and can afford produce created by the human spirit engaged with nature.

The fine wine industry is becoming the de-facto biodynamic laboratory. Worldwide, vigneronns embrace the esoteric teachings of Steiner in pursuit of a more distinctive wine. It makes complete sense that this small but growing cadre of winegrowers embrace biodynamics in answer to the sameness of today's industrialized "luxury" wine. These growers are turning to the "genius of the place" in pursuit of distinctiveness.

Farming in synchronicity with nature always results in expressive grapes... and that is the first step to a wine of character.



## WINEGROWING NOTES

By Eric Sothern

*P*OV chronicles the interaction of site, variety and vintner that occurs every vintage on RSV's certified organic and biodynamic Carneros vineyards.

In the early 1980's, RSV wagered that Bordeaux varieties would thrive in Carneros. Spurred by the observation that Carneros showed affinities, viticulturally speaking, with places like Pomerol and St. Emilion, RSV planted Merlot and the Cabernets on select sites. The cool, maritime climate of the region allows for slow, gentle ripening of balanced, expressive fruit. The Cabernets, Franc and Sauvignon, grow towards the top of the Vandal Vineyard, RSV's northernmost Carneros site, on the lighter, well-drained soils the Cabernet family prefers. There's Merlot on Vandal as well, on the skirts of the ridge that runs through the property, and quite a bit more on the OSR and Three Amigos Vineyards to the south, where the clay gives Merlot the wet feet it prefers.

RSV divides each property into blocks, to allow individual attention in both farm and cellar to each lot of fruit. Each variety, vintage and site lend individual character to every lot of wine. POV illustrates the concept of interrelationships inherent to biodynamics as each variety brings its strengths to complement the final blend, making for a wine that transcends its individual components.



## TASTING NOTES

By Eric Sothern

*T*his deep ruby wine exudes an aromatic melange replete with earthy fennel, olive, violet, red berry and plum. A sip finds these flavors persist as a bright mouthful, dense with the sort of plush tannins that get a chef's wheels spinning. No screaming from the glass here, but rather a quietly confident invitation that merits an evening's attention. This wine drinks well now, yet will offer exceptional rewards after a few years of bottle age.

## STAND AND DELIVER

*P*OV makes me crave meat and cheese and the Vineyard Kitchen delivers with deliriously delicious Tartlets and Sausage Puffs. POV is luscious and juicy but not in a tacky, slap you in the face kind of way. You could say it's a stand and deliver type of wine - always there when you need it for last minute get-togethers and for the "I don't feel like white wine" moments.

Bake the sausage puffs and tartlets ahead of time and freeze them on sheet pans. Next time someone arrives unannounced, heat the oven to 350 degrees F and pop them in for 15 to 20 minutes until they are piping hot, then crack open a bottle of POV.

Tartlets and puffs are the life-blood of the RSV food and wine experience. We couldn't prepare these delicious treats without our precious mini-muffin tins, the workhorses of the Vineyard Kitchen. Day in and day out we call the pans to action and they respond well. I've sent them to all of our Glutton and Gourmand members as a gift with the POV- more can be ordered from [robertsinskey.com](http://robertsinskey.com). To keep your pans in tip-top shape, wash them immediately after use or set them aside until you can get to them. Do not soak them or they will rust. Dry in a 300 degree F oven for 15 minutes to keep them at their shiny best.

Until the next wine...

Maria



## CARAMELIZED ONION, SMOKED HAM & CHEESE TARTLETS

Tartlets can be topped with sliced cherry tomatoes for a little zip and color.

Yield: About 30 tartlets

*1 Recipe Caramelized Onion, Smoked Ham & Cheese Filling*

*1 recipe Brisee Dough*

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Press the brisee circles evenly into the mini-muffin tin.
2. Using a small spoon, scoop a small amount of the filling, about 2 to 3 teaspoons, into the crust. It's OK if the filling rises above the top of the crust.
3. Bake for 20 minutes on the bottom rack of the oven. Reduce the oven heat to 350 degrees F and continue baking for 10 to 15 minutes until the tops of the tartlets are puffed and golden. Cool to warm. Run a small sharp knife around the edge of the tarts to release.

Serve warm, or cool and refrigerate. Reheat in a 350 degree F oven for 10 minutes to serve.



## CARAMELIZED ONION, SMOKED HAM & CHEESE FILLING

One cup of liquid, half & half or heavy cream, to two large eggs is the ratio for the basic custard filling. You can add up to one cup of cooked vegetables or meats to this basic custard to make any filling you desire.

Yield: 3 1/2 cups

*2 tablespoons unsalted butter*

*1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced*

*Kosher salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*3 large eggs*

*1 1/2 cups half and half or heavy cream*

*4 ounces smoked ham, chopped into small pieces*

*1/2 cup shredded aged cheddar or similar cheese*

*1 tablespoon chopped flat leaf parsley*

1. Heat a medium sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the butter and lightly brown. Add the onions and cook until the onions are golden and their juices are dry, season with salt and pepper. Spread evenly on a plate to cool quickly.
2. Whisk the eggs together in a medium bowl. Whisk in the liquid and season with 1 teaspoon of salt and a few grinds of black pepper.
3. Add the cooled onions, ham, cheese and parsley to the egg mixture and stir to combine well. Refrigerate until ready to use.



## PATE BRISEE

Yield: 30 2-inch circles

*1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour*

*3/4 teaspoon salt*

*12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, cold cut into cubes*

*1/2 teaspoon white wine vinegar*

*3 to 4 tablespoons ice water*

1. Mix together the flour and salt in a mixing bowl or in the bowl of a stand mixer.
2. By hand or with a paddle attachment, cut the butter into the flour until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal.
3. Add the vinegar and then just enough water so that the mixture comes together and is not too wet. Form into a round, flat patty, wrap in plastic and let rest for 20 minutes in the refrigerator.
4. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.
5. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and roll the dough 1/8" thick on a lightly floured board or counter. Cut the dough into 2" circles and place the circles on the sheet pan. Use parchment paper in between layers to keep the circles from sticking together.
6. When you are done rolling the circles, place the pan in the freezer and freeze until solid. After the circles are frozen, they may be scooped up, placed in a zip lock bag and stored in the freezer for up to 3 months. Keep them frozen until they are ready to be defrosted and placed in the muffin tin.



## SAUSAGE AND HERB POTATO PUFFS

Yield: 48 puffs

*3/4 cup water*

*3 ounces (3/4 stick) unsalted butter*

*1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt*

*3/4 cup all-purpose flour*

*4 large eggs*

*1/2 cup grated Gruyere or other firm cheese*

*1/4 cup grated Parmesan*

*1/2 teaspoon chopped rosemary*

*1 teaspoon chopped thyme*

*1 1/2 cups crushed cooked potato – Yukon gold or yellow Finn type*

*2 cups cooked spicy sausage, crumbled*

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Lightly butter four 12-slot mini-muffin tins.
2. Bring the water, butter and salt to a boil in a medium sauce pan. Remove the pan from the heat and add the flour.
3. Return the pan to medium high heat and stir until batter pulls away from the side of the pan. Scrape into the bowl of a standing mixer. Turn the mixer on and allow the paddle to cool the dough slightly for about a minute.
4. On low speed, add the eggs one by one. After each egg is added increase the speed to medium and beat until the egg is incorporated. The eggs may also be beaten in by hand. Beat well after all eggs have been added.
5. Add the grated cheese and herbs. Beat until well incorporated. Fold in the potato and sausage until combined and season to taste with salt and black pepper.
6. Drop a heaping tablespoon of batter into each compartment of the prepared muffin tin. Batter may also be dropped by the tablespoonful onto a parchment lined sheet pan. Brush with egg wash and bake in the preheated oven for 30 to 40 minutes until puffed and golden.

Make ahead: Bake and freeze the puffs or place the filled muffin tins in the freezer well-wrapped to store for up to 3 weeks. To bake: preheat oven to 450 degrees. Egg wash the puffs straight from freezer. Bake for 40 minutes and then reduce heat to 400 degrees and bake until puffed and golden. Serve warm.

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Winemaker: Jeff Virnig  
Recipes: Maria Helm Sinskey  
Photos and Text: Rob Sinskey  
Editing and Tasting Notes: Eric Sothorn  
Vineyard Manager and Editing: Debby Zygielbaum  
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ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS  
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

FINE WINES FROM ORGANIC VINES  
6320 Silverado Trail Napa, CA 94558 - tel 707.944.9090 or 800.869.2030  
[www.robertsinskey.com](http://www.robertsinskey.com)