

ABRAXAS
VIN DE TERROIR
LOS CARNEROS, 2006



ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS
R S V
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

ABRAXAS - A WINE YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

Unless you're an über wine geek, you haven't been looking for a "Vin de Terroir." It's not on the average wine drinker's radar. Fortunately, things can and do change.

A few decades ago, between college stints, I spent my summers waiting tables in a successful Central Coast restaurant. The most popular white wines of the day were California Chablis (which, unlike its namesake, usually contained no Chardonnay), Johannisburg Riesling, and Chenin Blanc. These popular wines were good in their own way and went perfectly with the white tablecloth cuisine of the day... remember chicken Kiev? They had good acidity, no wood, usually a touch of residual sugar, simplicity and, best of all, affordability.

During this time, a few renegade winemakers made wine from a little known grape called "Pinot Chardonnay." The wine failed to achieve critical mass until the famous Paris tasting when two Napa Valley Chardonnays, now without "Pinot" in the name, won the taste off against many classic white Burgundies. This one accomplishment unleashed a vinous gold rush. A winemaker once told me that he made Chardonnay so that he could afford to make Pinot Noir. It became a cash cow. The public lapped up Chardonnay of all types. It got to the point where, in the consumers mind, all white wine was Chardonnay. Its popularity almost condemned other white varieties to extinction.

Chardonnay was planted in every wine growing region of the US, whether it should have been or not, and all winemakers felt obliged to make their version. As winemakers flexed their muscles, chasing high scores in the trades, the simple Chardonnay became a caricature of the Burgundies it was originally modeled after. Winemaking techniques, such as the overuse of malolactic and barrel fermentation, the use of

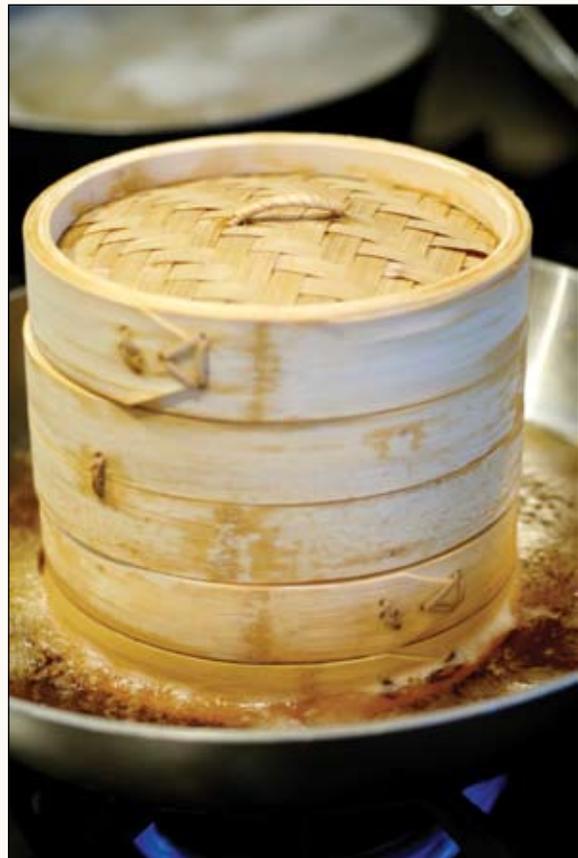
oak chips and flavorings, de-acidulation, super ripe grapes and the like, pushed the wine into Barry Bonds like proportions.

Many experienced wine drinkers began feeling "beat up" by their wine, wrongly concluding they no longer liked white wine. Consumers kept trying, but as the tyranny of Chardonnay continued and the variety dominated most wine lists, they had difficulty finding a style that worked with dinner. Then, not too long ago, un-oaked Sauvignon Blancs from New Zealand began to appear on wine lists. This Kiwi wine had something that most winemakers in the US had been trying to suppress, bracing acidity. The light bulb went on - it wasn't white wine that was turning folks off, just overdone ones.

We are now in the midst of a renaissance of sorts as both winemakers and consumers expand their palate by experimenting with new varieties and blends. Pinot Gris is nipping at the heels of Chardonnay as the most popular white wine. Riesling sections of wine lists are growing. Gruner Veltliner is so mainstream it is almost passé. All of this has been driven by a desire to find wines that work at the dinner table instead of the bragging table.

Cuisine is what inspired Abraxas. RSV no longer makes Chardonnay, because a more interesting white wine for the table could be made using aromatic varieties. Some might argue for single varietal wines, but by working with four classic varietals, a balanced wine can be made every year by adjusting the varietal mix instead of adjusting the chemistry. It will always be a work in progress with one goal in mind, to make the most elegant, balanced, and cuisine friendly white wine of the vintage from RSV's CCOF certified organic and Demeter certified biodynamic - Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard.

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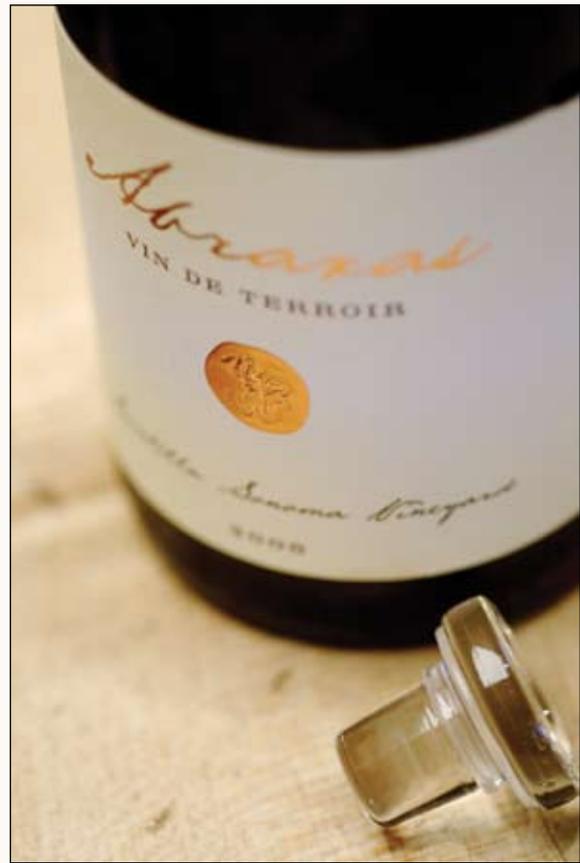
WHAT IS ABRAXAS, VIN DE TERROIR?

Taking inspiration from the natural weather patterns of the Carneros, RSV decided to plant a mix of Alsatian varieties, each with their own response to the local heat summation and adjust the ratio of the blend each vintage to make a naturally structured and expressive wine.

RSV called the vineyard Scintilla, as in a spark of an idea; and the wine Abraxas after the Egyptian Gnostic god of the 365 heavens. It is a wine inspired by nature and defined by the vintage.

NEW BOTTLE, NEW STOPPER

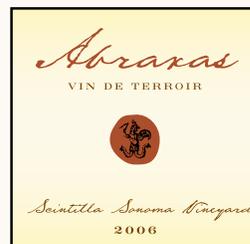
As with RSV's Pinot Blanc, this vintage of Abraxas is now in a traditional style dark glass that better protects the wine from harmful ultra-violet light. A little less traditional is the new glass closure. Skip the corkscrew, give the cap a twist and pop the glass stopper. When you are done, either put the stopper back on the bottle and store the leftover wine upright in the fridge or, if you're like us and you can't help but drink the whole thing, toss it in the recycling bin.



(3)



TASTING NOTES



This wine is all about food. Aromatic, balanced and complex, it begs for the traditional cuisine of Alsace (tarte flambé, choucroute garni, munster with honey), yet is at home with spicier cuisines of Mexico (fish tacos, carnitas), India (biryani, samosas, curry) and Asia (sushi, dim sum, pho, fresh and fried spring rolls). As a matter of fact, it is hard to find a style of cuisine that this wine does not compliment.

Abraxas proves that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. If you hunt for the individual contributions from each grape, they are there: the Riesling presents hints of white nectarine and flowers and Gewurztraminer lends the perfume of its unmistakable exotic spice. Pinot Blanc adds delicate aromas of apples and almonds, while the Pinot Gris provides backbone in the form of texture and refreshing citrus. The integration is seamless. Abraxas is a pure reflection of vineyard and vintage, making for a unique and beautiful "Vin de Terroir."

(4)

BIG BUNS, LITTLE DUMPLINGS



I could have given you a recipe for choucroute garni and it would have gone splendidly with the Abraxas but I wanted to do something that pushed the envelope a little. These dumplings are fun to make as appetizers or in combination as a main dish. Set a few hours aside and have fun.

Until the next wine...

Maria

(5)

TOFU & BOK CHOY DUMPLINGS

Yield: 24 dumplings

1 pound baby bok choy, washed and sliced
1 tablespoon cold pressed vegetable oil
7 ounces firm tofu
2 large egg whites
6 scallions, white & green parts, minced
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
2 teaspoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons minced ginger
1/2 teaspoon sesame oil
2 teaspoons salt
2 dozen gyoza wrappers (or wonton wrappers cut into circles)



1. Heat the oil in a wok or a large sauté pan. Add the bok choy and saute quickly until wilted. Let cool, then drain and chop finely. Press out any excess liquid and reserve.
2. In a food processor, puree the tofu with the egg whites and add to bok choy along with the scallions.
3. Combine the remaining ingredients, except the gyoza wrappers and add to the bok choy mixture, mixing well.
4. Place about two teaspoons of filling in the centre of each gyoza wrapper. Draw dough up and pinch together at three points to form a triangle, leaving middle of filling exposed. Dampen the dough lightly around the edge with a little cold water on the tip of your finger.
5. Arrange on a square of parchment paper and place in the steamer. Steam over boiling water until the dumplings are cooked through, about 4 minutes. Serve with soy sauce or the dipping sauce of your choice.

(6)

SPICY MUSTARD GREEN & GINGER BUNS

Yield: 24 buns



Filling:

1 pound Purple or Red Mustard Greens, washed and sliced
1 tablespoon cold-pressed vegetable oil
1 teaspoon salt
4 scallions, white & green parts, minced
1 tablespoon soy sauce

3 teaspoons minced ginger
2 teaspoons minced garlic
1/2 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Bun Dough:

1 heaping teaspoon dried yeast
1/2 cup lukewarm water
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1/4 cup boiling water

1. Prepare the dough: Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water. Add 1/2 cup of flour. Mix thoroughly. Cover with cloth. Let rise 1 hour, until bubbles appear.
2. Dissolve sugar and vegetable oil in 1/4 cup boiling water. Stir well. Cool until lukewarm. Pour into yeast mixture.
3. Add 1 3/4 cups flour. Knead dough on lightly floured board until smooth. Put into extra large, greased bowl in a warm place. Cover with damp cloth. Let rise until double in bulk, about 1 hour.
4. Prepare the filling while the dough is rising. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat and add the oil. Add the greens and sauté until wilted and pan juices have evaporated, season with salt.
5. Place the greens in a strainer to drain any remaining juice. Greens should be very dry. Chop finely and toss with the scallions, soy sauce, ginger, garlic, sesame oil and red pepper flakes. Reserve.
6. On a floured board, knead dough 1 minute and roll into one long, sausage-like roll 2 inches in diameter. Slice the roll crosswise into 1 inch pieces. Flatten each piece with the palm of your hand and roll with rolling pin into 3 inch rounds.
7. Place 2 tablespoons of filling in center of each round. Gather dough up around the filling by pleating along the edges. Bring the pleats up and twist securely and firmly.
8. Place each bun on 2 inch square of aluminum foil on steamer tray. Cover with a towel. Let rise 1/2 hour, until dough springs back when touched with finger. Remove towel. Steam over briskly boiling water 10 minutes.

(7)

JUICY CHICKEN DUMPLINGS

Yield: 30 dumplings



1 pound skinless boneless chicken, minced
4 teaspoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons rice wine
2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced
1 teaspoon garlic, green & white parts, minced
4 scallions, minced

1/4 teaspoon red chili flakes
2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1/2 teaspoon sugar
4 ounces sesame oil
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, sifted

1. Mix the chicken with the soy sauce, rice wine, ginger, garlic, scallions, chili flakes, salt and sugar. Stir in one direction until it becomes a paste. Stir in the sesame oil and mix well.
2. Add 1 cup of cold water gradually to the flour and mix into a dough. You may not have to add all of the water. The dough should be stiff. Turn out onto a flour board and knead until firm and elastic. Wrap the dough in plastic and let it rest for one hour.
3. Roll the dough into a 2-inch-thick log and cut it into 1/2 ounce balls. Flatten each ball lightly with your hand then roll out each piece into a 3 inch circle, rotating the dough counter-clockwise while rolling so the center is slightly thicker than the edges. Place about 1 to 1 1/2 tablespoons of filling on each circle and pinch the edges together into 18 pleats. Place the dumpling in a steamer and steam for 5 minutes over high heat.

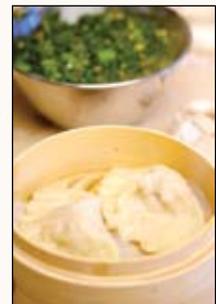
How to Use a Bamboo Steamer

Before using for the first time, scrub the bamboo thoroughly with mild soap and water. While it is still wet, steam it for 30 minutes. To cook, place one section of the bamboo steamer in your wok (or snugly over a large pan) so that it fits nicely with some room around for the edges. The steamers can be used with a wok or a saucepan. The basic rule of thumb is that a wok should measure about 2" larger in diameter than a steamer. If you don't have a wok and want to use a saucepan, you'll get the best results when they fit together snugly so that the water drips back into the pan. Add water until it just touches the bottom of the first bamboo layer. Then stack the top section of your bamboo steamer, one on top. Cooking can be done in the top section only.

Use a bed of lettuce, aluminum foil or parchment paper to line the steamer bottom. Take care not to cover all of the holes. If you are using a dish, make sure there's enough room between the dish and the sides to allow the steam to rise. Cover snugly with your bamboo steamer lid, and start the water boiling. Steam food to perfection by taste-testing with a fork, to determine when the food is cooked.

Care & Storage of Bamboo Steamer

Rinse the steamer with water and, if necessary, use some mild soap. Do not put it in the dishwasher. Store in a well-ventilated place.



(8)

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FINE WINES FROM ORGANIC VINES

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