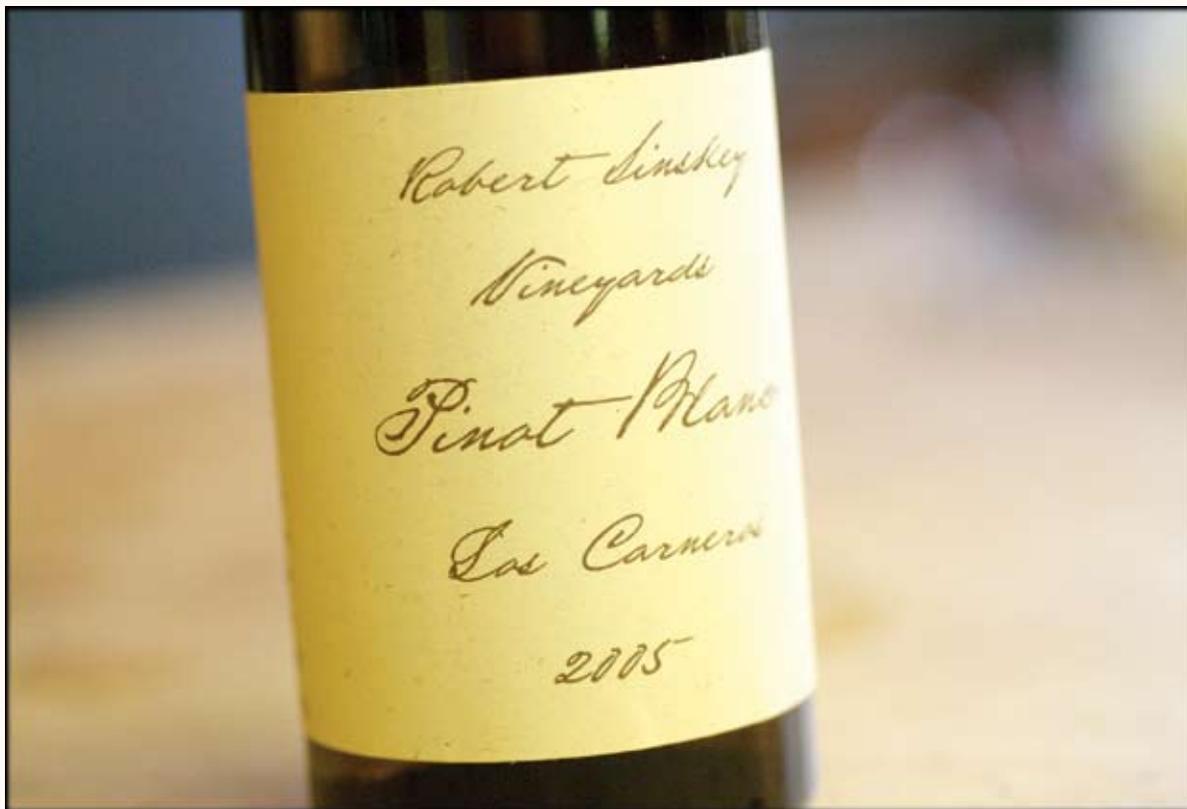


PINOT BLANC
LOS CARNEROS
2005



ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS
R S V
NAPA, CALIFORNIA



About the photographs:

All of the square images were taken using a \$20 plastic Holga 120 film camera. It has one shutter speed, two aperture settings- bright sun and shade and focusing is a best guess scenario. The thought was to slow down the photography process with an exercise that is opposite of the current technological state of image making where the digital revolution has made it possible to shoot first and fix later. Using the Holga requires an environmental awareness where the light level determines whether a shot can be had at all.

SLOW WINE, FAST WORLD

“They don’t use oak chips here, do they?” questioned Carlo Petrini, founder of the Slow Foods movement, of his winemaker host. Mr. Petrini had just given an impassioned speech arguing that the French government’s recent folly greenlighting the use of oak chips in wine will help create a sea of sameness in a land known for its diversity and individuality.

The French have been losing market share to the New World, particularly the world “down under” where technology in wine rules supreme and the use of oak chips in inexpensive wine is commonplace. Unfortunately, the French have not been reading the news of the Australian wine glut. Aussies planted too much of a good thing- Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay- handled it all in a similar fashion, and have created a commodity that trades more on price point than wine quality. By getting into this game late, the French run the risk of becoming a “me too” wine region where diversity is considered a negative and homogeneity is considered an asset.

The danger of this strategy is the loss of less marketable wine varieties (Jacquère, Chasselas, Altesse, Roussanne, Molette, Gringet, Malvoisie, Mondeuse Blanche, Gamay, Mondeuse, Persan, Savagnin, Poulsard, Trousseau, Melon à queue rouge, Cinsault, Grenache, Mourvedre, Muscadelle, etc.) and their genetic stock. The tragedy for consumers will be a lack of diversity, the inability to predict regional wine style and diminished compatibility with food. Instead of chasing the market, the French have the opportunity to define one through education and to use purity and diversity as a point of distinction. If everyone does their part by drinking a bottle of something they have never tried before, then perhaps we can reverse this trend toward sameness.

Mr. Petrini waited for an answer. The winemaker stuttered before answering with Clintonian precision “Not *here*, we don’t!” Those in the know understood what he meant. In that particular facility, barrels were used; however, the parent company used wood chips for their more moderately priced wines.

Making slow wine in a fast world is difficult. In some ways we suffer from too much information. Global marketing and instant feedback skews our approach to making wine. All too often, the demands of the marketplace determine wine style as opposed to the growing region. It is like fitting a square peg in a round hole. It can be done, but you have to cheat a little... and when the cheating is rewarded in increased sales and profitability, the seduction is complete and an international commodity is born.

Slow wine is pure. It is a wine that is grown organically, perhaps even biodynamically, and not mused with in the cellar. It is true to region and true to varietal character. You don’t always know it when you buy it, but you know it when you taste it. It has a naturally vibrant texture. It feels like it belongs in your mouth... and it tastes like the grapes from which it was made.



WINEGROWING NOTES

*Robert Sinskey
Vineyards
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This Pinot Blanc is a pure wine that epitomizes the spirit of Slow Wine. The grapes for this wine were grown organically in three of RSV's Carneros vineyards, the OSR and the Three Amigos Vineyards in Napa and the Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard just over the Napa county line. All three vineyards are farmed Biodynamically (Demeter certification pending) using techniques designed to encourage biologic diversity- creating an environment of natural vitality. Year round cover crops are employed and mowed by sheep, whose own biologic activity further enriches the organic content of the soil. Later in the growing season, when the sheep are moved out of the vineyard, fritto misto scented tractors powered by home made bio-diesel (made by removing the glycerin from waste vegetable oil scavenged from local restaurants) prowl the land in a disc free zone.

Each block of Pinot Blanc is harvested at that perfect intersection of flavor and structure and fermented separately in stainless steel tanks. No wood chips, no barrel, no cork! Nothing gets in the way of the pure expression of the land.

TASTING NOTES

RSV's 2005 Los Carneros Pinot Blanc is, in fact, true Pinot Blanc, which would hardly be worth pointing out but for a case of mistaken identity. Much of the Pinot Blanc labeled as such in California is, instead, in part or whole, the lesser regarded Melon de Bourgogne. This impersonation was discovered quite a while ago, but, as you might imagine, no one is in a hurry to start calling his wine Melon.

This wine smells and tastes remarkably like classic European Pinot Blanc with aromatic blasts of fresh lemon, flint, jasmine and citrus blossom joined somewhat ironically by melon (little 'm' this time) flavors that resonate on the palate. The crisp fruit balances a rich texture tough to find on your favorite Weissburgunder, Pinot Bianco or even Klevner from the cooler continent.





PRECOCIOUS WINE FOR PRECOCIOUS VEGETABLES



The Pinot Blanc is a match with grilled fish and precocious vegetables. Precocious vegetables are the ones deemed antagonistic to wine by the powers that be. Woe are fennel, artichokes, asparagus, green beans and peppers in their bid for a place on a wine paired plate, but not with this wine! No matter which way you stretch it, thanks to its bright acidity and voluptuous aromas, this wine will take whatever denizens of the backyard garden that you throw at it and come back alive and kicking.

The prep might take you a bit of time, but the techniques are simple and once the prep is done the meal cooks in under 30 minutes. If you're so hungry you can't wait, marinate the fish and vegetables for 20 minutes at room temperature and then slap everything on the grill. It will be done and on your plate before you drain that last sip of wine from your glass.

Until the next wine...

Maria

GRILLED FISH WITH FENNEL, ARTICHOKE AND NEW POTATOES

Serves 4

1/2 cup verjus

2 tablespoons lemon juice plus 2 teaspoons lemon zest

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

2 large peeled shallots, sliced into thin rings

1 pound fingerling potatoes

2 large fennel bulbs with fronds

8 baby artichokes

2 whole fish, 1 pound each, gutted and scales removed



1. Make the verjus marinade. Whisk the verjus, lemon juice and zest, and olive oil together in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper. Mix in the shallots and let marinate for 20 minutes.
2. Cook the potatoes in boiling salted water for 10 minutes until just tender. Chill in an ice bath and cut the potatoes in half lengthwise.
3. Cut the fronds off the fennel bulb and reserve. Wash the bulbs and trim off brown areas. Slice the bulbs into 1/4-inch-thick slices and reserve.
4. Pull the tough outer leaves off of the baby artichokes and trim off the dark green tips. Cut the hearts in half and reserve.
5. Toss the prepared vegetables together with half of the verjus marinade and marinate for 2 hours at room temperature or overnight in the refrigerator.
6. Season the inside of the fish with salt and pepper. Stuff the cavity generously with the reserved fennel fronds. Pour the remaining marinade over the fish to coat well. Marinate in the refrigerator for 2 hours.
7. Preheat the grill. Drain the vegetables over a bowl to reserve the marinade. Remove the fish from the marinade and discard.
8. Grill the fish for 8 to 10 minutes on each side. Grill the vegetables for the same amount of time or until they are tender and caramelized. Brush the vegetables and fish with the reserved vegetable marinade before removing from the grill.
9. Arrange the vegetables on a serving platter with the whole fish on top. Drizzle with the remaining marinade. Use the back of a spoon to remove the fish filets from the bone to serve.



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