

ABRAXAS  
VIN DE TERROIR  
LOS CARNEROS, 2005



ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS  
R S V  
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

## FOLLOW NATURE

Inspiration can come in surprising ways. I love wines from Alsace, but growing the same varietals in Carneros seemed a pipedream. I feared the weather would force us to make clunky wines.

Of course, that didn't deter us from making Alsace the destination of one of our junkets. We sought out producers we perceived as "pure" winemakers and, just for contrast, a few of the industrial sort. We wanted to see if biodynamically grown wines in Alsace were different from their conventional stable mates.

I think the deck was stacked as the contrast was stunning. It didn't take a super-taster to distinguish that the biodynamic wines were more vibrant and exhibited aromatic and textural superiority over the conventional wines.

One producer left a particularly strong impression. Marcel Deiss makes a few wines that he categorizes as Vin de Terroir. He believes that the land is more important than the individual grape variety and therefore makes blends from his top vineyards. Unfortunately, we chose to visit him on some obscure French holiday. He had let all of his staff go home while he, his wife and young son dealt with the onslaught of holiday visitors.

So he sat us down, poured us a round, and ran out of the room to deal with customers. Every few minutes he ran back in, poured us a different wine and then dashed back out. This went on for hours with little or no dialog between us while Maria and I prayed that our daughters would set a naptime record. Our luck ran out as they began to stir, requiring more and more of our attention. Finally, we cornered Marcel and

bid our adieu. Overwhelmed with customers, he turned to us wild-eyed and said, in broken English, “You came to learn something?” our focus shifted from the crying babies in our arms to this intense man. “Yes,” I replied. Marcel touched my shoulder and exclaimed, “Follow nature and the rest will come.” At first, I was speechless. I felt like I was in a Lucas film and Yoda had just revealed the secret of the “Force.”

As we drove away from the Domaine of Deiss his parting words of wisdom reverberated in my head. I thought that we were following nature by farming organically and biodynamically. Then I realized that we could take it even further and, by taking a cue from the natural weather patterns of the Carneros, we could plant a mix of Alsatian varietals, each with their own response to the local heat summation, and adjust the ratio of the blend each year to make a naturally structured and expressive wine.

We 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.

Cheers,  
Rob Sinskey



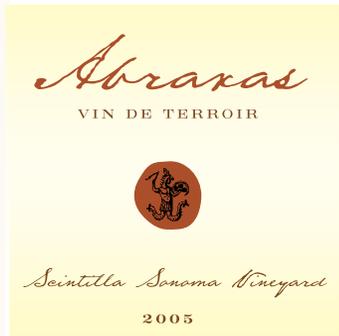


Sauteed Halibut Cheeks with Tomatoes, Basil



Lemon Tarragon Aioli

## WINEGROWING NOTES



Abraxas is pure from the farm to the table, depicting each year's dance of farmer, grape, land and vintage. RSV's organic and biodynamic farming methods yield beautiful fruit that requires little manipulation. The goal in the cellar is to stay behind the curtain, allowing the grapes and yeasts to create unique, natural beauty that warrants no use of oenological cosmetics. RSV presses whole clusters of grapes brought to the cellar in small lots as each block of vineyard reaches the intersection of ripeness and structure. The juice then ferments in stainless steel at relatively low temperature, preserving fresh fruit character. That's about it. No oak, no induced malolactic fermentation, no tweaking... we even jettisoned the cork.

## TASTING NOTES

Abraxas - Vin de Terroir, Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard, 2005  
(37% Pinot Blanc, 26% Riesling, 19% Pinot Gris, 18% Gewurtztraminer)

Spurred on by success with Pinot Blanc and emboldened by drinking delicious Alsatian 'Vin de Terroir,' RSV planted the Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard with Pinot Blanc, Riesling, Pinot Gris, and Gewurtztraminer. Abraxas emulates the efforts of the likeminded Alsatian vintners, who eschew the Alsatian tradition of single-varietal wines for blends from top vineyards.

As is appropriate for a wine from a vineyard called Scintilla, the Abraxas Vin de Terroir sparkles in the glass. Bright stone fruit, honeysuckle, citrus blossom and wet stones all lurk amongst its heady perfume. Lemongrass, crisp nectarine and bright grapefruit play off the wine's honeyed texture on the palate.



## BEND OVER BACKWARDS!



Abraxas is a bright and aromatic wine, which makes it an incredibly flexible dinner companion. Its affinity for lemon makes it amazing with all fruits of the sea, but please do not pigeonhole it as a mate solely for flipper and fin. It's mighty tasty as well with cured meats, pork in all its contortions, salads and vegetables. I chose the following fish recipes because, at that moment in time, I craved seafood. The following day I was in the mood for a big, fat pork sausage on the grill and the Abraxas served equally well to wash it down. So stretch your mind and flex the wine.

Until the next wine...

Maria

## FRIED ANCHOVIES

These crunchy little fish are great served as a hors d'oeuvre before a meal or as a shared appetizer. There is no need to clean the anchovies unless you are squeamish about eating whole fish. Sardines are also flattered by this preparation.

Serves 4

*1 pound fresh anchovies or small sardines*  
*1/4 cup semolina flour*  
*1/4 cup all-purpose flour*  
*1/4 cup fine cornmeal*  
*1/4 teaspoon cayenne*  
*1 teaspoon salt*

*2 large egg whites lightly beaten with*  
*1 teaspoon cold water and 1/2 teaspoon*  
*salt (save 1 yolk for aioli)*  
*1 cup extra virgin olive oil for frying*  
*Lemon Tarragon Aioli, Recipe Follows*

1. Rinse the fish and pat dry. Refrigerate them until you are ready to cook them.
2. Mix together the semolina, all-purpose flour, cornmeal, cayenne and 1 teaspoon of salt in a flat dish or pie pan.
3. Put the beaten egg whites in a flat dish or a pie pan.
4. Slowly heat the olive oil in a shallow pot with sides at least 3 inches tall.
5. Dip 1/3 of the anchovies in the egg white, lift them with your hands or a slotted spoon and allow the excess whites to drip off. Roll the fish in the dry ingredients to coat well. Shake off the excess and place the fish on a cake rack while you finish coating the remaining fish.
6. Cook the fish a batch at a time in the hot oil. Do not crowd the fish. If the oil gets too hot and begins to smoke, reduce the heat. When the fish are golden brown, about 1 to 2 minutes, remove them with a slotted spoon to a paper towel to drain.
7. When all of the fish are cooked, sprinkle them with salt and serve on a platter with the aioli on the side.



## LEMON TARRAGON AIOLI

Yield: 1/2 cup

*1 large egg yolk*

*1 teaspoon lemon juice*

*1/2 head roasted garlic\*, squeezed and mashed*

*1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh tarragon*

*1/4 teaspoon salt plus more to taste*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*2 tablespoons lemon olive oil*

*1/4 cup expeller-pressed canola oil or other neutral oil*

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the egg yolk, lemon juice, roasted garlic, 1/4 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of black pepper.
2. Whisk in the lemon olive oil and then the canola oil into the yolk mixture until the aioli is light, shiny and thick. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Adjust the acid with a few more drops of lemon juice if necessary.

\* To roast garlic, slice a head in half horizontally, place the halves back together and wrap tightly in foil. Bake in a 375 degrees F oven for 1 hour until the cloves are soft and lightly golden.

---

## SAUTEED HALIBUT CHEEKS WITH TOMATOES, BASIL AND LEMON-SCENTED OLIVE OIL

This dish is about as simple as it gets. Halibut cheeks are moist and delicious and have a texture and flavor similar to scallops. Most come from large Alaskan Halibut were their size makes it worthwhile to carve out the cheeks. If you can't find cheeks substitute halibut filet or some large sea scallops. Note: Halibut cheeks are also great on the grill.

Serves 4

*1 1/2 pounds halibut cheeks*

*1 pint cherry tomatoes, washed and cut in half*

*6 large basil leaves*

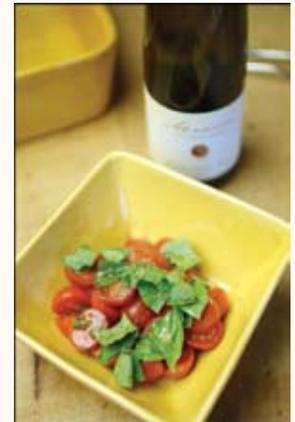
*Sea salt*

*Freshly ground black pepper*

*Extra virgin olive oil*

*Lemon olive oil*

1. Remove any white sinew from the cheeks and reserve in the refrigerator until ready to cook.
2. In a medium bowl, toss the cherry tomatoes with freshly torn basil leaves, salt and pepper. Drizzle with a little lemon-scented olive oil.
3. Remove the cheeks from the refrigerator and season them with salt and pepper. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat and add a small amount of extra virgin olive oil to lightly coat the bottom of the pan. Add the cheeks and brown on one side, about 2 minutes. Flip them over and cook on the other side until golden.
4. Serve the cheeks with the tomatoes spooned over the top and with a drizzle of lemon-scented olive oil.



ABRAXAS  
VIN DE TERROIR  
LOS CARNEROS 2005

Photos and Text: Rob Sinskey  
Tasting Notes and Editing: Eric Sothorn  
Recipes: Maria Helm Sinskey  
Winemaker: Jeff Virnig



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)