



*Pinot Blanc*

ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS

*Abraaxas*

VIN DE TERROIR

*Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard*

2004

text by rob sinskey and eric sothern - recipe by maria helm sinskey - photos by rob sinskey



## A SPARK!

**B**ack in the 1800's, over 150 grape varieties thrived in the vineyards of Alsace. Many of these vineyards were planted to a mix of varieties, often in the same row. The resulting wines were field blends, capturing the spirit of the vintage and the vineyard. Much of that diversity is now lost to history, as only seven grapes are allowed in AOC Alsatian wine. Furthermore, most modern Alsatian wines are made of a single varietal, and atypically for France, are called by that grape's name.

Recently, some of the best producers of Alsace have reverted to the practice of bottling a blend of several varietals as a prestige release, calling them by proprietary names and naming the vineyard on the bottle. These "Vin de Terroirs" are among the best wines of Alsace.

Imbibing those beautiful blends of Alsace struck a spark, illuminating the idea that if we planted several complimentary grapes on one piece of land, we could make a wine that would truly reflect the season and vineyard. We set about creating a blended wine that fit the place rather than the common practice of manipulating a single variety in the cellar to make up for the shortcomings of the vintage or the vineyard site.

Each variety that we planted in our Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard has its own ripening cycle and expresses itself differently with each growing season. At the end of a warm vintage, Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer will naturally have lower acidity while Pinot Blanc and Riesling will stay bright. In such a year, a higher percentage of the brighter varieties would find their way to the bottle. Conversely, a cooler vintage may call for more of the naturally lower acid levels of Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer. Our goal is to make a naturally delicious wine every year, using different ratios of each variety, so we can avoid the manipulation often found in modern, commercial winemaking.

## ABRAXAS



**N**o, this wine is not made in homage to a guitar god. Although Abraxas is the name of Carlos Santana's second album, the term dates back quite a bit further.

Abraxas is an ancient magic word (Abracadabra! is derivative) adopted by the Gnostics of the 1st and 2nd century as the name of their supreme being. They believed the name harbored great mysteries and magic since it contained seven Greek letters (alpha, beta, rho, alpha, xi, alpha, sigma) which when computed numerically equal 365 - the number of days in the year.

Abraxas commanded 365 gods, each possessing a virtue for each day of the year. Therefore, to RSV, Abraxas is the ruler of the vintage whose magic manifests as the indelible impression of the cycle of nature...ultimately expressed in this unique bottle of wine.



*Pinot Noir*



*Riesling*



*Pinot Blanc*

## WINEGROWING NOTES:

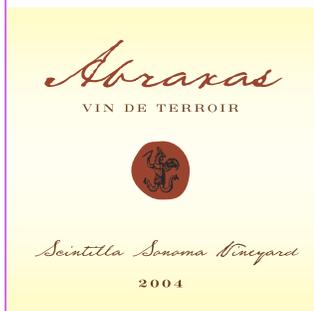
**S**cintilla (the double “L” is pronounced like a “Y” as in tortilla) is defined as a spark...as in a spark of an idea; or, as a small amount. Both definitions are appropriate for our youngest vineyard and our new wine.

Our Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard was planted in 2000 and 2001, with all the knowledge and forethought earned since our first vine went into the ground in 1982. Scintilla lies not far off from the sloughs that wind through the marshland bordering the San Pablo Bay. The bay sends fog up into Carneros, making it amongst the coolest growing regions of California. The Scintilla Vineyard, so close to the cooling maritime influence of the bay, seemed the perfect place for the grapes of Alsace.

### 2004 ABRAXAS – SCINTILLA SONOMA VINEYARD (35% PINOT GRIS, 35% PINOT BLANC, 25% GEWÜRZTRAMINER, 5% RIESLING)

We whole cluster pressed bunches of grapes harvested in individual lots separated by variety, clone, and vineyard block; and then fermented each individual lot in stainless steel with minimal fuss.

We did not induce malolactic fermentation nor did the wine see any wood, so there are no oak or butter flavors cloaking the essence of this wine. Instead, Abraxas is the honest and beautiful portrayal of the interaction of grape, farmer, vineyard and vintage.



## TASTING NOTES:

**A**braxas, as you might expect of a wine from a vineyard called Scintilla, sparkles... not as champagne sparkles with bubbles; instead, this crisp, dry wine sparkles with life. It is the color of white gold, with flavors that deliver bright bursts of crisp citrus, restrained tropical fruit, and aromatic accents of honeysuckle and sage, all wrapped up in a wonderful minerality. Abraxas scintillates!



## A NOTE FROM MARIA HELM SINSKEY

**A**braxas is so good it deserves the company of two gifts. The sriracha sauce will add a whole new dimension to the word spice. Add it to tacos, stir fries and anything that could use a dollop of heat. The sushi roller will give you endless joy after you practice rolling a few times. Once you master the art, your cocktail parties won't be complete without sushi rolls for hors d'oeuvres.

Don't think about this wine too hard. Open it and drink it. Enjoy its wonderful acidity and intoxicating aromas. This wine is the perfect foil for Japanese food and anything that has a hint of spice. As we found out at our last pig roast, roasted pork rubbed with aromatic spices is the long lost soul mate of Abraxas. I figured I had more of a chance to get you to make a sushi roll than to have you order and roast a hundred pound pig, so the sushi recipe follows. Those that want the secret recipe to the roasted pig will have to email me.

Have fun!

Until the next wine...

Maria

## SPICY LOBSTER (OR SHRIMP) AND AVOCADO SUSHI ROLLS

This recipe was born out of need. We were vacationing on Martha's Vineyard and drowning in freshly picked lobster meat. At first we consumed it just as it was and then with a squeeze of lemon. But soon interest started to flag. I realized I had to come up with something quick. I made a lobster salad with mayonnaise and sriracha (which I just happened to find tucked inside the refrigerator) and stuffed it into soft butter-toasted buns. It was pretty darn good. Still looking to expand my lobster meat horizons, I took the lobster salad one step further and started making Japanese style lobster rolls. The crowd went wild and the remaining tails were devoured as such. This recipe also is delicious when made with shrimp.

Yields 4 to 6 Rolls, depending how fat you like them

*Sushi rice (Recipe Follows)*

*2 tablespoons mayonnaise*

*1/4 teaspoon sriracha sauce*

*3 tablespoons finely sliced green onion*

*1/2 pound cooked shrimp or lobster meat, coarsely chopped*

*Salt*

*4 to 6 sheets toasted nori seaweed*

*2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds*

*2 medium avocados, pitted, skinned and sliced*

Prepare the sushi rice according to the recipe. Have this ready and warm before you start the rolls.

Combine the mayonnaise, Sriracha, green onion and seafood in a small bowl. Mix well and season to taste with salt. If you like a spicier roll add more Sriracha to taste.

Place the shiny side of seaweed down on top of the natural colored side of your rolling mat, with the longest end of the nori sheet parallel to the edge of the counter. Dampen your hands with cold water (keep a bowl of cold water nearby while working with the sushi rice) and spread about 1/2 cup of sushi rice across the toasted sheet of Nori. Spread the rice evenly over the surface of the seaweed. Leave a 1 inch strip free of rice at the top of the nori sheet, along its entire length. If the rice starts to stick to your hands, dampen them again with water.

Dry your hands and sprinkle 1 teaspoon of toasted sesame seeds evenly over the rice. Working 1 inch from the bottom edge of the nori, make an indentation with your finger in the rice. Spoon about 2 to 3 tablespoons



of the shellfish mixture onto the rice and distribute it evenly along the indentation. Place slices of avocado along the edge of the shellfish and sprinkle with a little pinch of salt.

Dampen the top edge of the nori with water. Starting from the bottom, fold the edge of the nori over the filling and press with the bamboo roller to compact. Using the roller, roll the sushi up as if it were a log of cookie dough. Seal the sushi roll by rocking it back and forth once you have reached the top edge where it was dampened.

Place on a plate and repeat until you have used up all your ingredients. Slice each roll into 8 or 9 pieces and enjoy on their own or dipped in soy sauce.

## SUSHI RICE

*1 cup sushi rice*

*1 teaspoon salt*

*1 tablespoon seasoned rice wine vinegar*

Rinse the rice in a bowl with cold water. Drain and repeat about 3 times until water runs clear. Drain the rice and transfer it to a 3 quart sauce pan. Shake the pan to level the rice or use the back of a spoon. Flatten your hand and place the tip of your index finger so that it is lightly resting against the top of the rice. Add just enough cold water to reach the first knuckle of your index finger. Sprinkle the rice with the salt and cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid. Bring the rice to a boil. Immediately after it has come to a boil, set the timer for 15 minutes and lower the heat to a very low simmer, use the lowest setting on your stovetop. Check the rice after 10 minutes to make sure all of the water has not evaporated. If it has, add 3 tablespoons of hot water and replace cover. When the timer goes off, immediately remove the rice from heat and allow it to sit, still covered, for 15 minutes. After that, remove the cover from the pan and fluff the rice with a fork. Transfer it to a medium bowl with a wooden spoon or rice paddle. Sprinkle the rice wine vinegar over the rice while tossing it gently with the spoon. Cover the rice with a damp towel and cool to warm. The rice is now ready to use.