

PINOT NOIR
LOS CARNEROS
2007



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS
RSV
NAPA, CALIFORNIA



THIS AIN'T NO PICNIC!

Life lessons in Pinot Noir...

By Rob Sinskey

When I took over the business, I told my father we would have five years before declaring bankruptcy.

That was twenty-two years ago. It wasn't that I didn't believe in what we were doing, it's just that the odds were stacked against us.

In 1982, we planted our first vineyards in the cool Carneros region to Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir. It was a daunting time. California was in a drought and the country was in recession. The Chardonnay market was saturated, Merlot had yet to achieve broad acceptance, and new world Pinots, with few exceptions, were perceived as vintners' folly. Only risk junkies pursued the thin skinned Pinot grape. It's a good thing it wasn't easy, because without the challenge I might not have stuck with a life in wine.

Pinot Noir became my muse. She scared and thrilled me at the same time. I didn't always understand her, but I intuitively knew that if we provided for her, she would reveal her subtle and elegant beauty. She had no qualms, however, about telling us when we made mistakes. At times, she gave us the silent treatment, closing in on herself, tight lipped and determined to reveal little; or she might throw a fit, hurling an aromatic assault of tomatoes, medicine chest and rubber tennis shoes. The worst was when you missed the mark by showing up late (to harvest) and discovered your delicate Pinot shriveled up like a beauty queen who had spent her better years tanning at the beach, now prematurely aged, brown at the edges with a tired essence of prune.

Jeff Virnig and I decided that, for better or worse, we were going to figure out this grape, learn what made her happy and craft

wines of natural beauty. Not necessarily showy wines; instead, our Pinots would be elegant, intriguing wines that evolve, holding back just enough to pique your interest and retain your attention.

We looked to the dirt and decided that the first step was to return the soil to a thriving subterranean environment of earthworms, microorganisms, bacteria and mycorrhizal fungi. So in 1991 we went organic and started applying Biodynamic preparations to the soil, vines and compost. We quit discing, planted cover crops and employed sheep to graze the lush growth between the vines.

We worked with selections and clones that matured in sync with the local climatic conditions and discovered that later ripening heirloom selections (as opposed to the newer, less subtle, earlier-ripening, French clones) allowed for longer hang time, developing complex flavors while maintaining acidity, structure and moderate alcohol levels.

We found that less is more when working with the grapes in the cellar: less manipulation, less additions, less handling, less new wood. We learned to be confident with our fruit and not mask it with cellar cosmetics.

Two thousand and seven is our twenty-second vintage of Pinot Noir. Once we were the youngest upstarts making Pinot Noir in Napa. Now, we are a little gray and we've earned a few worry lines, but we feel even more hip today with two plus decades of Pinot under our belt, working with the same vineyards and the same winemaker, making better wines every year... and best of all, we're still here to tell the tale.

"Two thousand and seven is our twenty-second vintage of Pinot Noir."





WINEGROWING NOTES:

By Eric Sothorn

If winegrowing tests the patience of those seeking instant gratification, then organic and Biodynamic winegrowing will drive them insane!

First, find a suitable site for what you want to grow, then plant your vines and carefully guard the young plants against the challenges that will beset them. With luck, you'll see the vineyards' potential in about seven years, with the best wines often coming from vines decades old.

The shortcuts of modern farming technology tempt with claims of easy fixes for anything that ails you: vigor, nutrition, mildew, weeds, insects... an input (pseudonym for chemical) is just a phone call away. These technologies work fast, but at what cost? Once most of the flora and fauna have been knocked out of the vineyard, a vacuum is left for pathogens and pestilence to fill, for which there is another quick fix... and so begins the downward spiral of rescue chemistry.

Organic and Biodynamic farming methods work more slowly and are more difficult to implement, requiring thought and patience. Often, when farms transition from the chemical model to progressive farming, there is a withdrawal period and things appear worse before they get better.

RSV has experienced steady increases in both quality and character of fruit since the move to organics in 1991. Of late, this upward curve seems to be steepening. It could be the vines, the farming, the experience or, most likely, a combination of the three. Some people taste the wines and ask if there is a new winemaker at RSV. The answer, of course, is no! Jeff Virnig has made wine at RSV for over twenty years. That's part of why the wines continue to get better. Winemakers and vines both improve with age.





Certified Organic Vineyards, Biodynamically Farmed

TASTING NOTES:

By Eric Sothern



Rilliant, translucent ruby color gleams from the glass while bright red fruit and spice aromas greet. Classic flavors of red raspberries, cranberries, and orange peel conspire with sensual, earthy undercurrents that define cool climate Pinot Noir. The wine balances silky texture against a bright edge that keeps you returning to the glass for more (and then to your plate for another nibble).

Some rules need a little refining. Unless you keep your house fairly chilly, we suggest you ignore the dictum that red wines should be served at room temperature. That recommendation originated



a long time ago, when the room temperature of your castle's wine cellar reached a high of about sixty degrees fahrenheit... which just so happens to be the ideal temperature for Pinot Noir. Red wines are generally served too warm, and no red wine on the planet tastes good at 80 degrees. A rule of thumb is to take your whites out of the fridge and replace them with your reds about 45 minutes before you want to open them. In restaurants, no one will be offended if you ask for an ice bucket to chill reds served too warm.

PIPE DREAMS...

By Maria Helm Sinskey

A Gougere is something you can really dig your teeth into - cheesy and aromatic, with just the right amount of contrast between the crust and the soft, luscious herb-scented interior. What's not to love about them? They go amazingly well with all wines, but especially with Pinot Noir. You'll find one version or another throughout all regions of Burgundy; some plain, some with herbs and some stuffed with cheese.

Gnocchi Parisienne makes good use of pate a choux dough. I like to imagine that they were invented by a homesick Italian while working in a Parisian kitchen or a heretical Frenchman cooking for his Italian bride.

The above two must-try treats, the Gougere and Gnocchi Parisienne, can be a challenge to make without one of my kitchen essentials, a piping bag with the right sized piping tip. You can make the Gougere with the two spoon technique, but it is a tedious job. However, I feel that a piping bag is required in making Gnocchi. It might take a couple of tries to get the hang of cutting the dough off the tip, but soon you'll be dropping nuggets of dough into boiling water like a seasoned pro.

Clean-up is always a pain. That's why I prefer plastic piping bags. I hate washing out the cloth version of these bags. It's a slimy job and if you don't do it well, you end up with a stinky, crusty, moldy bag in addition to wasting a lot of water. Plastic bags are much more sanitary because it's easy to see the spots you've missed through the clear bag. You can, of course, reuse the bags several times and when you need to change it, just slice the bag at the tip to pull it off.

I sourced my favorite piping tips and bags for RSV Glutton and Gourmand wine club members as part of their Pinot Noir package. All non-members can purchase the tips and bags from www.robertsinskey.com or from the neighborhood kitchen supply store.

Until the next wine....

Maria



GOUGERE

These big, golden, cheesy Gougeres are delicious served with most any wine, but they have a particular affinity for Pinot Noir. They hail from Burgundy where they are served in homes, wineries, restaurants, bars and pastry shops.

Yield: 30

1 1/4 cup water

10 tablespoons (1 1/4 sticks) unsalted butter

2 1/2 teaspoons salt

1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour

5 large eggs

1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan

1 cup shredded gruyere

1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh thyme

1/2 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary

Eggwash:

1 large egg beaten well with 2 teaspoons of cool water



1. Bring the water, butter and salt to a boil in a medium saucepan.
2. 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.
6. On a parchment-lined sheet pan, using a pastry bag, pipe the batter into 2-inch rounds, 2-inches apart. The batter may also be scooped into mounds with a tablespoon. Freeze.
7. To bake: preheat oven to 450 degrees. Position a rack in the center of the oven. Egg wash the puffs straight from freezer. Bake for 20 minutes, rotating pan once, and then reduce heat to 400 degrees and bake until puffed and golden, about 30 minutes more. Serve warm.

GNOCCHI PARISIENNE

These delicious Gnocchi are a fabulous alternative to pasta and work equally well as a side dish or a main course. Gnocchi (lump in Italian) can be made from potatoes, ricotta, semolina or, as one enterprising cook discovered a long time ago, pate a choux dough..

Serves 4 to 6

1 1/4 cup water

10 tablespoons (1 1/4 sticks) unsalted butter, plus additional for serving

2 1/2 teaspoons salt

1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour

5 large eggs

1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan, plus additional for serving

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat leaf Parsley

1. Bring the water, butter and salt to a boil in a medium saucepan.
2. 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.
6. Spoon the batter into a large piping bag fitted with a 1/2-inch wide tip. Place a rubber band tightly around the open end of the bag to prevent the batter from squishing out the back end.
7. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Salt lightly. Squeeze the bag 6-inches from the tip until about a 1/2 inch length of batter is exposed. Dip the tip of a small knife into the boiling water and, using the flat edge of the piping tip as a guide, cut the small nub of batter off the tip. Repeat rapidly until the pot is filled with gnocchi. The dough will rise quickly to the top of the pan. Let them cook for 30 seconds then scoop them out with a slotted spoon and move them to a large plate. Continue until all of the batter is used up.
8. Serve gnocchi with a generous amount of butter and finely grated Parmesan. See the next page for alternate serving suggestions.





VARIATIONS:

Brown Butter Gnocchi Parisienne:

Heat a large non-stick sauté pan over medium high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of butter and brown lightly. Add the gnocchi and sauté until golden and crisp. Serve as a side for roasted meats and chicken.

Gnocchi Parisienne with Wild Mushrooms and Duck Confit:

Saute gnocchi as for the brown butter gnocchi. Add 1 cup sauteed wild mushrooms and 1 cup shredded duck confit at the end and heat thoroughly.

Gnocchi Parisienne with Fried Sage and Sausage:

Heat 16 large sage leaves with the butter until the butter starts to brown. Add the gnocchi and sauté until golden. Add 1 cup of crumbled cooked sweet sausage and heat thoroughly.

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