

MARCIEN
PROPRIETARY RED
LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY
2004

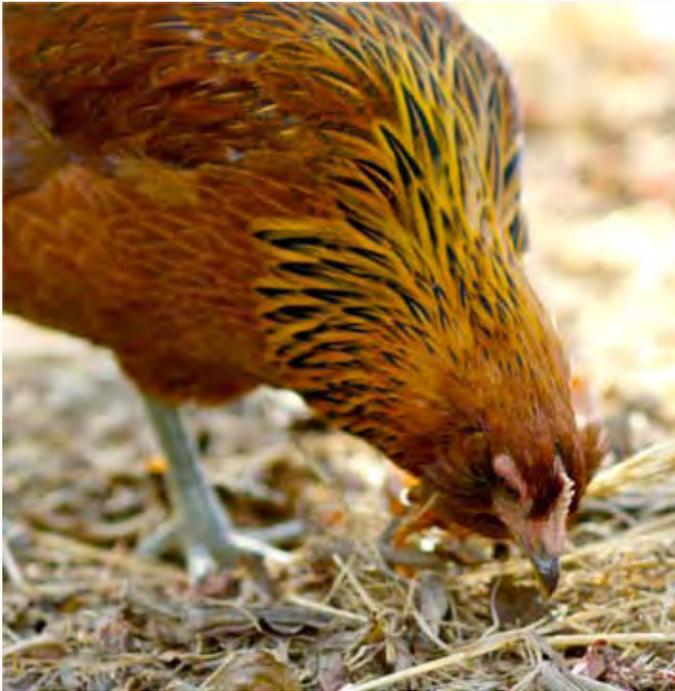


ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS
R S V
NAPA, CALIFORNIA



Marcien - Proprietary Red - Los Carneros - Napa Valley - 2004

WINE CULT - BIODYNAMICS AND THE NEW TERROIRISTS



Some view Biodynamics (BD) as a religion, perhaps even a cult. Even though RSV is an organic and Biodynamic winegrowing concern, RSV practices an agnostic form of BD whose beliefs are based on the practical aspects and goals of BD; because, God (or the Devil) is in the details.

Rudolph Steiner developed BD in 1924 for a series of lectures given over a period of twelve days at the Koberwitz Estate in Austria. Steiner addressed the declining state of agriculture brought about by the new industrial methods. While these new methods increased yields, farmers also experienced a concurrent decrease in quality and increase of blight and pestilence.

The local farmers looked upon Rudolph Steiner as a guru or savior. Steiner had already proven himself as a multi-disciplined master, having developed, among other things, Anthroposophy (a path of knowledge leading the Spirit in Man to the Spirit in the Universe) and the Waldorf method of child development and education. Steiner was seen as holding the key to the mystical premise of interrelationships which he derived from Goethe's work of learning by observing the genius inherent in nature's systems.

The farmers begged Steiner to help them; however, Steiner, though living in an agrarian world, was not an active farmer and was too busy with his other endeavors. Finally, near the end of his life, he agreed to talk about new agricultural methods for healing an ailing earth by applying his theories of Anthroposophy to agriculture.

Over those twelve days, Steiner lectured about many things, some topics seemingly unrelated to agriculture, such as religion, the spirit

“Search outside of you for what is within and search within for what is outside.”

Rudolph Steiner

and cosmic forces. Steiner was concerned with interrelationships, stressing that everything on the farm was interconnected and influenced by “life” forces. He emphasized that each farmer was personally responsible for their actions, “search outside of you for what is within, and search within for what is outside.” He believed the human spirit to be directly connected to agriculture. Once a farmer was willing to open their mind, they could then confidently observe the natural world, resist the temptation of false gods (the agriculture chemical industry) and make decisions to work in harmony with the natural environment.

Steiner, in 1924 Northern Europe, had neither the science nor the support of the scientific community to back up his systems. Without the backing of science, Steiner relied on religion, mysticism and ritual to explain his methods. It is this very aspect that makes many modern day farmers uncomfortable with BD. However, Steiner himself knew these methods would be criticized, even attacked, and tried to keep BD a tightly held secret among his followers until the systems could be fully realized. (He had sufficient justification for his paranoia: just before the lecture series, a chemical fertilizer company, feeling financially threatened by Steiner’s movement, attempted to bribe one of Steiner’s followers into supplying them with the text of the lecture series in hopes they could use it to discredit Steiner and derail the budding BD community.) An attendee of the lecture series, Rudolph Meyer, observed that, “the Koberwitz impulse (of 1924) is one of those germinal deeds which will come to their full fruition only after the end of this millennium.”

Now, through the filter of time and a scientific community that is more receptive, BD methods do not seem that mystical. The only thing that is mystical is that Steiner, without a background in agriculture, conceived them in the first place.

In practice, Biodynamics can be baffling if one gets hung up on the rituals. Composting was very important to Steiner and is a sound organic practice. No mystery there, but the BD 500 and 501 preps known as Horn Manure and Horn Silica, require a leap of faith if you take Steiner’s explanations at face value. However, they are not so far fetched when seen through the modern lens.

BD 500, otherwise known as Horn Manure, is made by taking the horn of a cow (the female, not the bull or steer) and packing the open end with fresh cow dung from a lactating cow. Once that lovely task is completed, the horns are buried in a pit, open end down, for the duration of winter, or about six months. When unearthed, the manure is removed from the horns, mixed with rainwater by stirring until a vortex is formed, then reversing every three minutes, for one hour. The “tea” is applied at the rate of twenty five grams of BD 500 in 15 litres of water per one acre. This is done twice a year; in spring and autumn during the descending moon phase.

Steiner’s explanation of BD 500 is a little too New Age for comfort. Contrasting Steiner’s explanations with modern comments might help put things in perspective. According to the text from Steiner’s lecture series “Agriculture:” *“If you could crawl around inside the living body of a cow you would be able to smell how living astrality (Astral- Relating to unknown forces; of, concerning, emanating from, or resembling the stars) stream inwards from the horns.”* A cow is a living thing that converts energy through the digestive system into a form (manure) that other entities can use. Another example: *“The plant seeds are quickened in the night of the Earth.”* Quite simply, seeds thrive in living, well-fertilized soil. *Steiner proposes that astral-etheric forces (etheric- belonging to the heavenly regions, rarefied, sublime) are preserved and can be utilized in cow manure which is permeated with nitrogen-bearing forces and oxygen-bearing forces. Preserving these*

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Rudolph Meyer

BD embodies a reaction to overly manipulated wine.

forces in a certain way and applying them has an enlivening and astralizing effect on the soil. In contrast to water soluble fertilizer, which only affects the watery part of the soil, Horn Manure also impacts the earthy, mineral component of the soil. The composted Horn Manure is a living fertilizer, rich in nitrogen; it has been broken down in a way that is easily assimilated by the soil. It is teeming with beneficial micro-organisms that can jump start depleted farm lands. On a human level, think how yogurt helps return good bacteria to the intestines and restores normal digestion after taking antibiotics.

Similar parallels can be drawn with the second most important preparation known as BD 501 Horn Silica. Again from "Agriculture:" *"Everything active in silica-like substances contains forces that do not originate with the Earth, but rather with the so-called distant planets - Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. These planets are working in the siliceous substances." Steiner proposed that the distant planets form the nourishing substances in plants by way of silica. Silica makes the plant receptive to the expanses of the universe. It has a strong relationship to warmth, and warmth heightens the effectiveness of the forces that work through the "siliceous substances." Silica is connected with the distant planets and with summer-light and warmth. The 501 preparation gives the plant a sensitivity for these day and summer forces, making it receptive to the totality of the outer planet forces by engendering nutritional potential into substance. As all fruits are ripened through the power of the Sun, 501 helps the plant to manifest this Sun force into healthy structure that leads to better quality.*

As BD consultant Alan York would say, that is a lot of VooDoo DooDoo. The way we explain BD 501 today is that it benefits leaf activity by encouraging the light (summer) process. Put another way, it aids photosynthesis and strengthens plant development.

There is no magic bullet that will result in great wine. As a matter of fact, there is no generally accepted definition of great wine. Some try a standardized approach by creating a point system; unfortunately this approach encourages the manipulation of wine to resemble a single ideal without regard to unique character or sense of place. BD embodies a reaction to overly manipulated wine, driven by a group of vintners who will redefine quality by leading the charge for a renaissance of terroir. Biodynamics, as a system grounded in caring for each specific vineyard as a unique and dynamic place, is one way to assure that wine will continue to reflect the special qualities of where the grapes were grown. Pure wine with a sense of place.





WINEGROWING NOTES:

c.1386, marciem "of the planet Mars" (originally in reference to astrological influence), from L. Martius "pertaining to the planet Mars," from Mars (gen. Martis). The noun meaning "an inhabitant of the planet Mars" is attested from 1883.

This wine might as well be from Mars. RSV always takes the path less traveled, like growing grapes organically before it was hip to do so, or planting Bordeaux varieties in the Carneros when fellow vintners said it would be a mistake, (arguing that those varieties would not ripen in the windy cool region close to the bay) or the pursuit of elegance over power by making wines that pair well with cuisine even when the status quo asked for powerful, jammy, fruit bombs or woody, tannic, monsters.

Now RSV releases a Biodynamically grown, Right Bank styled wine named Marciem. Though from Napa, it is stylistically light years from the typical Napa wine. Perhaps it is best described as a bridge between the old and new worlds.

Marciem is a small production wine from RSV's cool Carneros vineyards. Though made of the classic Bordeaux varieties, the actual constitution of the cuvée does not appear on the label. This would create limitations as the final blend is not pre-ordained from year to year. Marciem is blended to taste as late in the game as possible. By printing the blend on the label, RSV would be printing itself into a corner and instead of making the most expressive wine from a given year, compromises would have to be made to accommodate production.

The varietal make up of this wine should not really matter. Everyone should just be concerned with how much they enjoy the wine. When you see Marciem, you will know that it is RSV's best effort given the vintage and vineyards. The blend will adjust in order to create a pure wine that is complete, complex and elegantly structured no matter what the vintage brings.

RSV's Vineyards are Certified Organic and this year they are all Demeter Certified Biodynamic!





TASTING NOTES:

A deep, slightly translucent red (reminiscent of the red planet on a clear night) hints of this wine's vibrant character. Aromas and flavors of brambly red fruits (cherry, cranberry, berry, currant, plum) are complimented by notes of violet pastilles, spiced fruit chutney and licorice. Refreshingly crisp, this wine has fine, polished tannins that focus and define the flavors with a framework that carries the long-lived cherry fruit, spice and vanilla through to a seemingly never ending finish.

MARCIEEN TRIVIA:

Flavius Marcianus, known in English as Marcian and in French as Marcien, was Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire from 450 until his death in 457. Marcian, considered one of the best of the early Byzantine emperors, was recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Church as a saint. Before becoming Emperor, Marcian was taken prisoner in 431 by the Vandals in fighting near Hippo Regius; brought before the Vandal King Geiseric, he was released on his oath never to take up arms against the Vandals.

Seems like the Emperor has indeed made good on his oath to the Vandals. Instead of taking up arms, he's taken up grapes in the saintly act of producing great wine. While Marcien is sourced from several of RSV's Biodynamically farmed Carneros vineyards, the majority of the grapes come from the Vandal Vineyard.

RSV's relatively cool Carneros vineyards have more in common climactically with St. Emillion than other New World growing regions. The grapes enjoy a long growing season, developing flavor without becoming over-ripe and flabby.

MORE MARCIEEN TRIVIA:

In Biodynamics, Mars is an influential astral body. It has an effect on plants with red flowers or fruit. Silica and iron originated, and is energized by Mars. Silica can aid photosynthesis while iron provides minerality. On the spiritual side, Mars influences humankind's iron will. Marcien combines the rich astrality of the red planet with the deep minerality of our earthly vineyard for a truly etheric delight.



Chickens in the RSV vineyards. The chickens eat bugs and weeds, suckle the vines while enriching the soil and providing fresh eggs. They are contained by a solar powered electric fence.







AROMATIC BRAISED SHORT RIBS WITH RED WINE AND SWEET SPICE

Serves 4 to 6

4 pounds short ribs
2 teaspoons Chinese Five Spice powder
Freshly ground black pepper
Salt
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
6 large garlic cloves
1 cup red wine
1 cup tomato puree
2 cups chicken stock or water
3 whole star anise pods



1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Rub the short ribs well with Five Spice powder and then season with salt and pepper.
2. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the olive oil to the pan and then the short ribs. Brown on all sides for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from the pan to a plate and reserve while you cook the onion.
3. Drain off all but 1 tablespoon of fat from the sauté pan and add the onions and the garlic to the pan. Cook over medium heat until they soften and start to brown, about 5 minutes.
4. Add the short ribs back to the pan with the wine and bring the wine to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and simmer for 5 minutes.
5. Add the tomato puree, stock and star anise to the pan and bring to a boil. Cover and place the pan in the preheated oven. Cook for 2 hours covered. Remove the cover turn the ribs over and continue to cook for another 1/2 hour until the ribs are meltingly tender.
6. Place the ribs on a serving platter. Strain the juices through a fine sieve pushing as much of the vegetable through as possible. Season the juices to taste and pour over the ribs. Serve with wide eggs noodle, mashed potatoes or roasted root vegetables.

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