

CABERNET FRANC
VANDAL VINEYARD
LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY
2002



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS
RSV
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

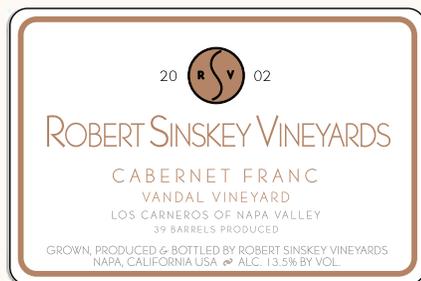
DNA typing, it's not just for the criminologist anymore, now it's for the wine geek too. Not long ago, wine nerds like us could only speculate on the origins of one of the most widely planted and critically acclaimed grape varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon. Now, with the insight of technology, we know who dunnit... and his name is Franc.

Before phylloxera forced vinifera vines off their own roots and modern farming embraced clones, sex occurred amongst the vines. Let me explain. For centuries, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc existed side-by-side in Bordeaux's vineyards. One fateful year, thanks to a bird, a bee or perhaps a tipsy vineyard worker, they cross-pollinated. The grapes that set as a result bore seeds with the genetic code of Cabernet Sauvignon. Deer, fowl and the like pilfered the grapes and passed the seeds. Those seeds grew into vines whose fruit impressed some sage vigneron, and the rest is history. In perhaps the most surprising aspect of this story, the above-described tryst that produced Cabernet Sauvignon most likely did not occur much before the eighteenth century. So, the world's most popular red grape is but a few hundred years old, born of older, wiser grapes, and baptized in bird guano or deer scat. In answer to the question, "Who's your daddy?" Cabernet Sauvignon must reveal its sordid past and respond, with deference, "Cabernet Franc!"

In its relatively short tenure, Cabernet Sauvignon has come to dominate the world's plantings of red grape varieties. Up to the 1960's, acreage in Bordeaux devoted to Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon remained roughly equal. Today, in that same region, the plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon outnumber Cabernet Franc two to one. Outside France, Cabernet Sauvignon thrived and built its reputation in a wide range of climates, particularly the relatively warmer growing regions of the New World. Meanwhile, its understated father continued to thrive in the little nooks and crannies whose climates it found agreeable. Cabernet Franc is a constituent of most, if not all, of the famous wines of Bordeaux, especially those of the Right Bank. Cheval Blanc, one of the top wines in the world, is predominately Cabernet Franc, as are many of the perfumed and rustic reds of the Loire Valley. From just a few vines in the late 1960's, plantings in California have grown to a few thousand acres; still considered small, but growing, as winegrowers rediscover the beautiful wines Cabernet Franc can produce when grown in the right place.

(1)

WINEGROWING NOTES



RSV's Vandal Vineyard, in the northernmost corner of the Napa side of Carneros, is an ideal spot for Cabernet Franc. The relatively cool climate, similar to that of Bordeaux's Saint Emilion region, allows parallel sugar and physiological ripening. With Cabernet Franc this is particularly important because in hotter climates, Cabernet Franc rushes to sugar ripeness, while physiological development lags behind, resulting in a big, rich wine with high alcohol and pronounced green vegetal flavors. Grown in Carneros, where the maritime influence of the bay moderates the afternoon heat with a cooling breeze, Cabernet Franc yields balanced wines full of character, with moderate

alcohol levels, refreshing acidity, firm structure, and, most importantly, no canned vegetables.

The 2002 vintage was long and mild, with a warm, dry September that nicely capped off ripening. In such a year, the goal is to balance alcohol and tannin with quintessential flavor. 'Rack and return' or *delestage* works well to achieve this balance. After fermentation begins, the young wine is drained from the bottom of a tank and put through a coarse screen to remove astringent seeds, then pumped back over the top of the tank onto the awaiting skins. *Delestage* ensures a steady and complete fermentation. It helps to dissipate heat, controls the development of undesirable bitter tannin, avoids reductive flavor, and aids in the extraction and stabilization of color and flavor compounds from the skins. After an eighteen month post-fermentation slumber in approximately 30% new French oak barrels, the wine was reunited with its scion by blending fifteen percent Cabernet Sauvignon into the final cuvee. It was bottled in late winter of 2004.

TASTING NOTES

Velvet ruby color catches the light like a gem. Aromas suggest a thicket of ripe wild berries made fragrant by summer air. Red and black berries resonate on the palate and are backed by wild bramble, sweet herbs and vanilla. The pronounced but polished tannins and refreshing acidity focus the flavors and spur thoughts of potential culinary suitors. Classic choices include rack of lamb or a grass-fed ribeye. Maria suggests buckwheat crepes with wild mushrooms or the world's best grilled cheese sandwich made with brioche and gruyere. To learn more food and wine pairings, visit www.robertsinskey.com

(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)

NO RELATION



I couldn't wait for an excuse to dust off my crepe pan and make these buckwheat crepes for the Cabernet Franc release. The earthy, mildly mushroom-like taste of the buckwheat marries well with both the mushroom filling and the wine. The name Buckwheat is a misnomer. It is not related to wheat at all. Wheat is a grass which buckwheat is not and therefore no relation. It is actually a cereal also known as Saracen corn or sarrasin in French. This little black seed, of Asian origin, made it's way to New World colonies in the backpacks of early Dutch settlers. It can be found all over the world with different names: Kasha in Russia, Soba in Japan and Buchweizen in Germany. We can all breathe a sigh of relief now that we've untangled that web.

These crepes are delicious no matter what you choose to call buckwheat. Roll them up and eat them on their own or with the mushroom filling below. Ham and cheese also makes an excellent filling for those who have less time to tarry in the kitchen.

Until the next wine...

Maria

(6)

BUCKWHEAT CRÊPES

Yield: 14 crepes

6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) unsalted butter, melted & cooled plus 2 tablespoons melted to brush pan
1 1/4 cup buckwheat flour
1/3 cup all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
4 large eggs
2 cups whole milk

1. In a large bowl, mix together the buckwheat flour, all-purpose flour and salt. Make a well in the center.
2. In a small bowl whisk the eggs and milk together until smooth. Gradually add the liquid to the well, whisking constantly and slowly drawing in the flour to make a smooth batter.
3. Whisk in the melted butter and allow to the batter to stand at a cool room temperature for 1 hour.
4. Before you begin to cook the crepes, check the consistency of the batter. It should be similar in consistency to crème anglaise. If it is too thick, add more milk to achieve the right consistency.
5. Heat a 9" crêpe pan or skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle a few drops of water on the pan; if it pops and sizzles, the pan is ready to use. Quickly brush the pan with a very small amount of the melted butter.
6. Use a 1/4 cup measure or 2 ounce ladle to pour the batter into the pan. Immediately pick up the pan and tilt and swirl it so that the batter covers the entire bottom of the pan. It might take a few tries to get the hang of it. The first one or two crepes are usually testers any way.
7. Loosen the edges of the crêpe with a thin metal spatula. You can use a spatula or your fingers to turn the crêpe over. Use your thumb and index finger of both hands to pick up the loosened edges of the crepe and quickly flip it over.
8. Cook on the flip side until lightly browned (usually less than a minute) and slide it out onto a plate. Repeat with the remaining batter.
9. Allow the crepes to cool before covering if you will not be using them immediately. Cover with plastic wrap and store at room temperature overnight, or in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 days. Allow the crepes to come to room temperature before using. Crepes can be reheated in the pan before filling.

To fill the crepes: Lay a warm crepe flat on a plate. Spoon 1/3 cup of the filling into the center of the crepe. Fold the sides towards the center and roll up the crepe like a burrito. Lay the crepes seam side down in a lightly buttered heatproof dish with 1/2 inch of space between each crepe. Warm in a 400 degree F oven for 10 to 15 minutes before serving.



(6)

MUSHROOM & CHEESE FILLING

1 pound white button mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
1/2 pound exotic or wild mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
1 small garlic clove, minced
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
2 to 2 3/4 cups béchamel, recipe follows
4 ounces Italian fontina, shredded

1. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add all the mushrooms and sauté until their juices are almost dry, 10 to 15 minutes..
2. Add the garlic and continue to sauté until the mushrooms start to turn

golden, about 2 minutes. Add the thyme and rosemary and season with salt and pepper.

3. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in just enough béchamel to moisten the mushrooms. The filling should be slightly loose but not runny. Stir in the cheese, season to taste and pour the mixture into a small saucepan. Cover the pan to keep the filling warm until ready to use. The mushroom filling can be prepared three days in advance and stored well wrapped in the refrigerator. Heat the filling in a pan with a little milk or cream to loosen it up before filling the crepes.

BECHAMEL SAUCE

Yield: 2 3/4 cups

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 1/2 cups whole milk
1/4 small yellow onion, peeled
1 small bay leave, dried or fresh
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper

1. Melt the butter in a medium saucepan. Stir in the flour with a wooden spoon until the butter and the flour are thoroughly combined. Continue to cook the mixture over medium heat for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat.
2. Whisk in the milk 1 cup at a time. Whisk until the paste is smooth than add another cup of milk and repeat the process until the milk is finished. The milk and flour should be smooth and slightly thickened.
3. Place the pan back over medium heat and add the onion and the bay leaf. Bring the sauce to a boil while whisking constantly. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 15 minutes stirring every 5 minutes with a wooden spoon. The sauce will form a crust on the bottom so try not to disturb it with the wooden spoon or you will have brown flecks in your sauce. To avoid this, you can transfer the sauce to a double boiler and continue to cook it for 20 minutes without having to stir.

(7)

CABERNET FRANC
VANDAL VINEYARD
LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY
2002

Photos: Rob Sinskey
Text: Eric Sothern and Rob Sinskey
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

Printed on recycled paper using soy based ink