

CABERNET SAUVIGNON
STAGS LEAP DISTRICT
NAPA VALLEY - 2002



ROBERT SINSEKEY VINEYARDS
RSV
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

THE ALTERNATIVE WINE

STAGS LEAP DISTRICT CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Man does not live by haute cuisine alone! Don't get me wrong. I love butter and rich sauces as much as the next guy, but I'm a California boy. I grew up with a burrito in one hand and chopsticks in the other. The foods I eat are eclectic and demand that the wines I drink are elegant and balanced.



Private bridge, Kyoto

My new mantra - “Wine shouldn’t hurt!”

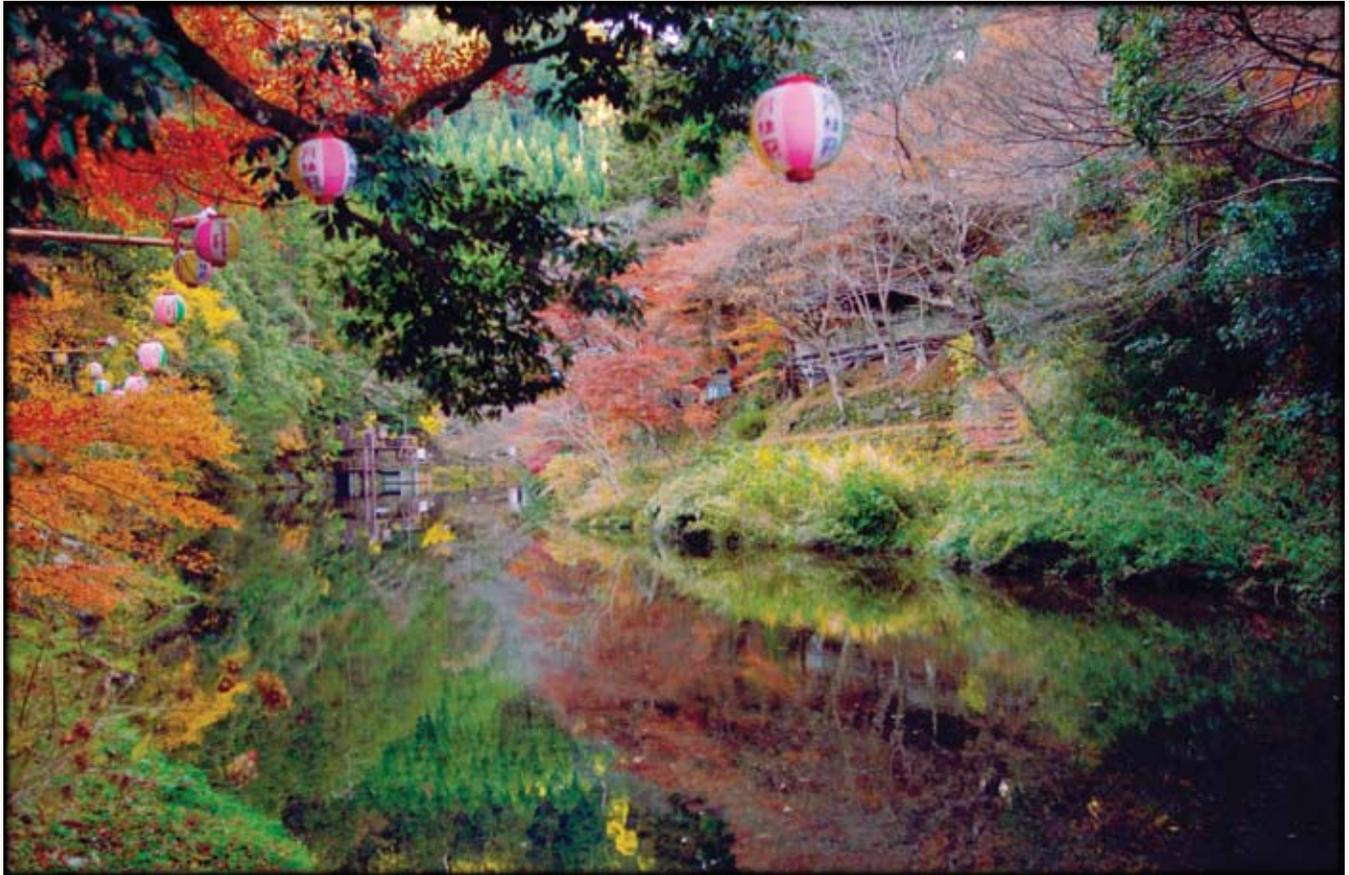
Somehow the public consciousness has been brainwashed to believe that a good cab should be a brawny, tannic and chewy monster. You know the kind, it’s the one with so much tannin that it sucks the moisture from your mouth and causes your cheeks to cave in, making you look like you left your dentures sitting on the night stand. After which everyone stands around talking about how massive the wine is and how good it will be in a few years. Well, I’m sorry BUT I DON’T GET IT! I am drinking the wine now! It should taste good today, to morrow, next year and ten years after that. As it ages it should evolve, but it should taste good as it evolves.

When I first entered the wine business, I worked with a wine maker who confided that wine was like a person. “If you’re surly when you’re young,” he said, “you’ll be surly when you’re old.” Some big, bad tannic wines just never do open up as they age. The key is balance rich yet elegant fruit, soft supple tannin and firm acidity.

How does this all fit into my eclectic diet? Well, a wine that has massive amounts of tannin with little acidity will act as an astringent. It will cause your mouth to dry out and you will crave fats now you know why steak houses are hot to tame those tannins. Acid, on the other hand, makes your mouth water and you’ll find your palate more receptive to a wider array of cuisine. With any Cabernet Sauvignon, a little fat is a good thing but the point is, with an elegant, balanced wine, the menu possibilities expand.



Photographing the Japanese Maple



Kyoto countryside looking west



Kyoto countryside looking east



Sukiyaki preparations

A Tasting in Tokyo

Recently, I journeyed to Japan to attend a tasting dubbed “The Renaissance of Terroir,” the latest in a series of events sponsored by an international group of like minded vintners. Nicolas Joly founded the group to demonstrate the strength of the organic/biodynamic movement and to rebel against the industrialization and homogenization of wine. All of the wines present at these gatherings must be organically grown, biodynamic, or in transition to become biodynamic, and must adhere to the strict winemaking standards of the group’s “Charter of Quality.” Few wines made in the USA measure up to this very strict code of purity. RSV is one of them.

The tasting was enlightening, providing the opportunity to taste world class wines made by kindred souls, but the following week spent exploring the people and cuisine was the highlight of the trip. Though it is easy to stereotype the Japanese as reserved, the people we met were passionate about craftsmanship and showed reverence and appreciation for the simple things. Maria and I ate in a seven seat restaurant where the chef did everything himself, from the purchasing of the ingredients to the washing of the dishes. His only assistance was from his regular clientele who helped themselves to the beer and sake in the refrigerator. We ate at a twelve-seat sushi restaurant where the fish was so fresh and delicious that it will be difficult to ever eat sushi stateside again, and a fourteen seat restaurant where the food was so exquisite we called it the Japanese dairy-free French Laundry. Every meal was exciting in this food-obsessed land, even the noodles we ate in the train station were perfect. Each chef we encountered exhibited pride in his creations and even more pride in sharing them with us.

All of the images herein were made during this journey. They don’t all relate to wine and food. Some are just images that appeal to me. Photographs, like food and wine, are best when shared.



Kobe Beef Sukiyaki



A sophisticated street display

WINEGROWING NOTES

North of the town of Napa, almost to the village of Yountville, lies the growing region known as the Stags Leap District. Over the years, the Cabs from the district have garnered a reputation of elegance. The grapes from this area benefit from a long, cool growing season balanced by adequate heat, allowing the grapes to achieve optimal ripeness without losing balancing acidity. The long growing season also helps the structure of the tannin to mature so the tannin evolves into “long chain tannin.” A wine with short chain tannin harbors an astringent bite, whereas a wine with long chain tannin is supple on the palate, making for an age worthy wine that also pleases in its youth.



ROBERT SINSEKEY VINEYARDS
CABERNET SAUVIGNON
Stags Leap District - Napa Valley

TASTING NOTES

No identity crisis here. This wine bellows Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon from the moment you remove the cork to the last sip from the glass. As the wine is poured, the luxuriously deep, rich and dark reddish purple hue seduces you. An aromatic vortex of ebullient dark fruit, rose petal and sweet herb swirls above the glass drawing the nose closer. One is tempted to stop at this point to indulge in vinous aromatherapy... but to do so would be to deny two very important senses. As the wine slips past the lips, flavors of barely sweetened cocoa and impossibly dark wild and brambly berries stimulate your taste buds. The wine reaches out to touch you with a supple texture held aloft by mouth watering, longevity giving acidity and smooth, ripe, long chain tannin.



Japanese maple leaves on the skylight

SOY AND MIRIN MARINATED BEEF TRI-TIP



Beef tri-tip is usually relegated to the BBQ, which means most of us are out of luck when the snow is 3 feet deep. This is a great way to enjoy tri tip year round. Its simple preparation leaves time to contemplate life over a nice glass of Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon. Relax, reflect and enjoy!

Until the next wine....

Maria

SOY & MIRIN MARINATED BEEF TRI-TIP

This is a simple preparation that goes beautifully with a rich red wine. Mirin will make the marinade sweeter than dry sake but either type of rice wine works well. It was a simple tip from a great friend in Japan.

Serves 4 to 6

- 2 1/2 pounds beef tri tip
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup Mirin sweet rice wine or dry sake
- 4 peeled and crushed garlic cloves
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

1. Trim fat and sinew from the exterior of the tri tip. The meat should be fairly clean when purchased.
2. Mix together the soy sauce, mirin and smashed garlic and place it in a non reactive dish large enough to hold the meat.
3. Place the meat in the marinade and marinate for 2 days turning once so that each side has 24 hours in the marinade.
4. Preheat the broiler. Place a rack in the middle of the oven.
5. Remove the meat from the marinade and season with pepper and a little salt. Place on a broiler pan and broil 10 minutes on each side brushing the meat every 3 minutes or so with more marinade to caramelize the outside.
6. Remove the pan from the oven and let the meat rest for 15 minutes before slicing thinly across the grain of the meat. Serve with the sides of your choice.



SAUTEED BUTTON MUSHROOMS

Button mushrooms have been underrated ever since their wild cousins moved in on their market share. I have had a special place in my heart for them since childhood. My father would cook a mountain of mushrooms down to what seemed like barely a cup, which allowed the seven of us just a small taste. The juicy morsel I took from the fork would be slightly caramelized on the edges and have a taste redolent of butter, good olive oil, garlic and parsley. It always left me wanting more. In this wild mushroom crazed world, I sometimes forget just how good simple button mushrooms are. I soon find myself hovering over a sauté pan waiting for the juices of a pound or so of white buttons to reduce with the smell of garlic wafting through the air.

Serves 4 to 6

- 2 pounds white button mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup chopped flat leaf parsley

1. Trim the stems of the mushrooms so they are flat with the cap. Quickly rinse off any dirt with cold running water. Drain the mushrooms well.
2. Heat the butter in a large skillet over medium high heat until the butter begins to brown. Add the olive oil and then the mushrooms. Saute the mushrooms for a few minutes then season with salt and pepper. The mushrooms will exude a lot of juice.
3. Add the garlic and continue to cook until the juices are almost completely dry. Fold in the chopped parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper.

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Photos and Text: Rob Sinskey
Tasting Notes and Editing: Eric Sothorn
Recipe: Maria Helm Sinskey
Winemaker: Jeff Virnig
Vineyard Manager: Kirk Grace



Stairway to heaven, Kyoto

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NAPA, CALIFORNIA

FINE WINES FROM ORGANIC VINES

6320 SILVERADO TRAIL NAPA, CA 94558 - TEL 707.944.9090 OR 800.869.2030 - WWW.ROBERTSINSKEY.COM