



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS
POV, NAPA VALLEY

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It is the idea that is pure, not the technology that delivered it

Every Picture Tells A Story, Don't It?

and they all have a point of view...

— Rob Sinskey

A picture doesn't lie, or so they say, but we know better. A wine shouldn't lie either, but again, we all know better. I would like to think that wine is like an old-school photojournalistic document of a place in time - a pure, unmolested representation of a vine's interaction with nature's rhythms. But just as a photographer can choose to approach a subject from a unique angle, or from their point of view, a winegrower must also decide with which point of view to approach the farm and the cellar. But how do we know what is "true" or "pure," or what that even means?

Technology is a part of our lives. I type this story on my macbook using a word processor with spell check. If a sentence doesn't flow, I can go back and rework it. I am free to express myself, devoid of nostalgic delusions that typing or writing longhand was better. I can test ideas, mull them around and reorganize my thoughts

until they work as a whole. These modern tools help me express an idea - for it is the idea that is pure, not the technology that delivered it to print. In this case, a word processor facilitates what is already there, waiting to get out.

Photography lives at the intersection of technology and art. Even though the craft has suffered from tech temptation, there have always been purists who selectively employed what they considered to be "honest" technology. Historic legends, like Ansel Adams, used technology to realize a pure vision. Ansel knew photographic materials had limitations and, in his pursuit to emulate what the eye could perceive, created techniques to overcome the short dynamic range of film and paper. His goal was to create a pure expression of the landscape, yet he had to intervene in order to express the truth. He created the zone system,



compressing the gray scale to maintain detail in both highlights and shadows. But he drew the line at techniques that were dishonest. Just think if "Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico" were a composite? Instead of becoming a classic photograph, it would be relegated to postcard purgatory; just another sappy picture of an exaggerated moon artificially imposing its presence onto the landscape.

Instead, it is a subtle, romantic portrait of a small town as the moon rises.

Wine must also be approached with a point of view if it is to strike a natural balance between science and nature. There has been a lot of talk about "natural wine" and, though we aspire to minimalism, I am bothered by the idea that one does not intervene. Farming can mimic nature, but it is not nature's natural state. Nature is chaotic. It hates

a monoculture and will do its best to destroy it. Even if a farm is organic or Biodynamic, it is, at best, a simulation of nature. Every choice a farmer makes is an intervention, just as every choice a winemaker makes is an intervention. So how do you intervene, yet stay true?

Henri Cartier-Bresson believed in the decisive



moment, a convergence as graphic elements meet an emotional peak. He used the then modern technology of a hand held 35mm Leica to express a pure idea. Images were not cropped or manipulated - other than traditional darkroom technique - yet they strike an emotional chord. It was his timing combined with a clean sense of design and empathy for the human condition that allowed his images to achieve classic status while other more technologically proficient photographers were left with a legacy that amounted to little more than a box full of snapshots. Bresson's point of view gave him direction that defined his aesthetic. If Bresson had the technological choices available today, like image editing software, would he use them? Yes, I think so, but only as a modern darkroom (just think - no chemicals or metals to wash down the drain!) not as a manipulative tool, because to do so would be to invalidate his unique point of view, no longer creating an honest image.

Wine has many decisive moments that begin in the vineyard and continue until the cork is placed in the bottle. There is a truth in a vineyard that can be enhanced or destroyed by intervention. The trick is to create methods that allow a wine to achieve balance in a "natural" way... where less is more. No use of synthetics in the vineyard is a start, but an understanding of nature's dance is even more important to create a strategy where the vine can access nutrients in a natural way, with an

environment that takes advantage of nature's checks and balances. The most decisive moment, however, is when to harvest. Our point of view is that overripe grapes require intervention to make a balanced wine and should be avoided. If the right grape is planted in the right location, there is a natural convergence when a grape has structure and flavor... maybe not as much flavor as if it were picked later, but it has a natural, honest structure. It is at this moment that a wine will have a natural balance that cannot be put back if harvested late.

Modern winemaking teaches remedial techniques. It's like photo editing - a blemish can be removed, a moon added, colors changed. Everything is correct, but it is no longer right or true. Wine could be fermented with enzymes or concentrates then have colorants or other enhancers added and, if overripe grapes were picked, the alcohol could be decreased - creating the photoshopped equivalent of wine. The wine may be "perfect" yet something of character is lacking.

We are interventionists. We chose to plant Bordeaux varieties in Carneros (the Right Bank of Napa Valley) farm organically and Biodynamically, use tractors, manage our soil, combine grapes instead of chemicals and make a wine that is ideal for the table. RSV has a point of view that you husband, nurture and elevate, but not alter, in pursuit of a naturally pure wine of character. Balance will come naturally... and that is no lie.



There is a truth in a vineyard that can be enhanced or destroyed by intervention.



Wine Growing Notes

POV is a subtle, romantic portrait of place and time, a chronicle of the interaction of site, variety and vintner that occurs each vintage, made from three varieties of grapes grown in RSV's certified organic and Biodynamic vineyards located in the "Right Bank" of Napa, otherwise known as the Carneros. This region is cooler than the rest of the northern lands, lending an elegance that is sometimes obscured by terroir-robbing heat.

The 2008 vintage was a unique season that began with frost at budbreak and episodes of rain during bloom. These two early events conspired together to guarantee low yields. Then distant fires created a smoke-induced shade over the sun and, after a long, cool summer, a heat wave ensured a speedy harvest.

The beauty of being organic and Biodynamic, however, is that the vineyards have the resources to weather the vagaries of each season; even the really challenging ones. RSV's vineyards are even keel. They don't necessarily have bumper crops during big years but they also don't have as much loss in the challenging years. Like thrifty savers, the vineyards have the resources to support themselves when times are lean and are wise enough not to spend too much when times are easy.

RSV hand picks the three varieties, that include Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, as optimal flavor and structure intersect. Then, after almost two years in the cave, the wines are blended by taste, each variety complementing the other, to create an elegant, complete wine of balance and finesse.



Tasting Notes

The color is a deep, ruby-tinged purple, nearly opaque at its core. Bright and intense aromas escape the glass with suggestions of blueberries and cassis. But there is so much more: a blast of wild fennel, a touch of earthy olive, a dash of vanilla, a wisp of violet! The aromas find substance with a luxurious sip as impressive structure underpins the flavors, inviting culinary suitors with hints of a long-term relationship, at least until the end of dinner. Shockingly delicious.



Farming can mimic nature, but it is not nature's natural state.



BACK to EARTH

Dirt is responsible for producing food, essential for life. It also provides an anchor for non-essential, but pleasure producing grape vines. In combination with sunlight and water, dirt is a magical growing medium. Mistreat the dirt and cut off the other two members of the life-giving trine and you will have dust.

POV rises from the well-sustained dirt of RSV's vineyards. It captures the essence of a few distinct vineyards in a blend that is not based on fixed percentages of different varieties, but on the feel and taste of how the varieties fit together in each unique vintage. POV captures the dirt and sunlight with bright cherry notes and deep dark underpinnings of black currant and plum. Its top note of dried herbs and a shy bit of spice and vanilla from a blend of new and older French oak barrels complement the fruit admirably. POV shines at the table with bright acidity and a modicum of tannin, just enough to support and balance the vivacious fruit.

Like POV, potatoes are born from the depths of the dirt. Sunlight and water turn the subterranean potato into delicious nourishment. Spun into gnocchi, the sweet, nutty flesh of the potato is an admirable and rewarding companion to POV. Bumped up with a bit of fat and cheese, the experience becomes sublime. I often forget how easy it is to make gnocchi once the potatoes are cooked. Gnocchi are so comforting in taste and texture, my family can hardly wait for the bowl to completely fill with just-boiled nobbins before grabbing them with fingers and forks. Make some gnocchi, open a bottle of POV, enjoy what comes from the dirt, and time spent with your family.

Until the next wine...

Maria





Potato Gnocchi

Most wouldn't consider the beloved potato very attractive, but when we cry out for comfort food the ugly, dusty potato becomes a siren. This recipe requires the same amount of work as a bowl of mashed potatoes but is infinitely more satisfying and elegant.

Serves 6 to 8

3 pounds large Yukon Gold Potatoes
2 large eggs
1 large egg yolk
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
2 cups all-purpose flour
Butter and Extra Virgin Olive Oil to Serve
Grated Parmesan, Optional

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Wash the potatoes, prick them with a fork and place them on a sheet pan. Bake them in the preheated oven for 1 1/2 to 2 hours until they are very soft. Resist roasting them at a higher temperature to speed the process. This will cause the skin and flesh just inside the skin to become crusty. Cool them slightly and scoop out the insides. Rice the scooped out potato with a ricer or mash them with a fork. Season with salt to taste, taking into consideration that you will be adding a sizable amount of flour. Place them in a bowl and cover with a damp cloth to cool to barely warm.
4. Add 1 1/2 cups of the flour to the potatoes and mix lightly and quickly until well-combined. Beat the eggs and yolk lightly together in a small bowl. Add them to the potato mixture

along with a few grinds of freshly ground black pepper. Mix gently with your hands until all the ingredients are well incorporated. Add more flour if the dough is sloppy sticky.

5. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured flat surface. Knead lightly until dough is smooth and ingredients are uniform. The dough should be slightly tacky but not overly sticky. Let the dough rest for 20 minutes, uncovered.

6. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough into thin 1/2-inch logs and cut into 1/2-inch pieces. Using a generous amount of flour on your hands, pick up a piece of dough and press the cut edge against a ridged gnocchi paddle. Push the piece firmly against the paddle to make a hollow, roll it as you press to make the ridges on the outside. Let the gnocchi roll off the bottom of the paddle onto the counter. Alternatively, if you don't have a paddle, press each piece against your thumb tip to make a hollow or roll it over the back and off the tip of a floured fork tine to make the traditional ridged shape. Place the finished gnocchi on a lightly floured sheet pan. Cook them as soon as possible in boiling salted water (2 table-spoons of kosher salt per 5 quarts of water).

7. Lower the gnocchi into the boiling water, when they rise to the top let them cook for a minute or two and then remove them with a slotted spoon. Drain the gnocchi well and place in a heatproof dish. Sprinkle the gnocchi with salt if needed and then dot with butter or drizzle with good extra virgin olive oil. Dust with Parmesan, if desired.

If the gnocchi are not to be cooked right away, they should be frozen. To cook them, throw the frozen gnocchi directly into the boiling salted water without thawing. Their cooking time will be slightly longer than unfrozen but their preparation should be completed in the same manner as with fresh gnocchi.



Variations:

Crispy Golden Gnocchi

The fresh uncooked gnocchi can be sautéed to a crisp golden brown in butter and extra virgin olive oil. Heat a large pan over medium high heat. Add butter and brown lightly. Add a touch of olive oil and then the gnocchi. Cook, tossing frequently, to brown all sides of the gnocchi evenly. Serve as a side dish to accompany roasted meats and fish.

Brown Butter and Sage Drizzled Gnocchi

Fry sage in butter until the butter is brown and the sage is crisp. Drizzle over cooked gnocchi.



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