

ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS



PINOT NOIR, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY, 2010



- CCOF Certified Organic Vineyards
- Demeter Certified Biodynamic Vineyards
- 100% Pinot Noir
- Heirloom Selections and French Clones
- 32 Separately Harvested and Vinified Lots
- From All Five of RSV's Carneros Vineyards
- Cave Aged 10 Months in French Oak
- 30% New Barrels for Subtlety
- 193 Barrels Produced

WINE GROWING NOTES

Sometimes knowing what not to do is as important as knowing what to do.

The 2010 vintage started out ideal for Pinot Noir. A nicely sized crop set in the late spring and ripened languidly during a cool summer. Everything was chugging along just fine, evolving into the ideal harvest conditions. The first few blocks came in with perfect fruit.

Then, cue the music, the forecast called for an extreme heat wave. We mobilized the troops and picked day and night, trying our best to bring in the fruit as fast as we could. For proof: see video called Zygie talks smack about the 2010 harvest: <http://vimeo.com/20305472>

We got in a lot of it, but we just could not pick fast enough. The thermometer hit 113 degrees F in the Carneros! The vines did their best to weather the onslaught but some of the fruit came in at sugars too high for our tastes (while the finished, over-ripe wine might have received 96 points, we're not interested in

making a 96 point wine!) and we ended up with a few lots that were higher in alcohol than we like to see.

Now we could have de-alcoholized the wine to hit the mark, but in our book that would have been cheating. Respecting terrior sometimes means rolling with the punches. We prefer unmanipulated, real wine to Frankenwine and so we declassified about 30% of our Pinot Noir.

So what's the bottom line? There is less Pinot Noir to go around but what remained in our Los Carneros bottling is superlative!

WINE TASTING NOTES

A cushy-zingy Pinot Noir with bright cranberry and raspberry notes, an undercurrent of peat and a touch of exotic baking spices like cinnamon and vanilla. The wine is vibrant and full of life on the palate with a mouthwatering, long finish. Share with friends, family and those you want to know better.

FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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A Quarter Century of Growing and Making Pinot Noir in Napa!

I felt like a player in a bad 1970's movie. It was high noon and the streets of Napa were abandoned save for a lone, slow-moving red sedan. The downtown Napa "clock tower" tolled a distorted bell recording while I watched a Nation's Burger wrapper dance across the road like a tumbleweed. I glanced up to see the car creeping closer, the window rolling down as it honed in on me, the only sign of human life! As if on cue, the streets filled with the elevator muzak version of "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head" from tiny speakers implanted above every storefront...

"Excuse me!" called a woman from the open passenger window. I could see her companion, presumably her husband, holding a map against the steering wheel of what was apparently a rental car. "Can you tell me how to get to Napa?"

"You've found it!" I said as the two glanced cartoonishly at each other and then back at me.

"This is Napa?!? But, but... where are the wineries?" they sputtered.

I then went on to clarify, to myself as much as them, that the town of Napa shared the name of the greater Napa Valley but had little to do with the wine industry that made it famous. If they wanted to see wineries and vineyards, they would have to travel north. Relieved, they thanked me and scurried out of town. I wondered if I should laugh or cry as I watched their car disappear past the abandoned Woolworth's.

It was 1986, I was in my twenties and I had just moved to Napa. I reeled as the infamous words of David Byrne filled my head: "My God, What Have I Done!"

My father was in the pursuit of Pinot Noir and I had come to help. I felt it my duty to get involved - though the expense account didn't hurt. I knew why I was there, but I was experiencing culture shock. Napa, the legend, was in the making, but Napa, the town, had been left behind.

This was the backdrop of our first vintage. To put things in perspective, The Soviet Union was still in existence, Ronald Reagan was president, Nancy Reagan was promoting her "Just Say No!" campaign (which we later co-opted with our "Just Say Pinot!" campaign), Chernobyl and the Challenger exploded, Halley's Comet visited us, Pixar was founded, Oprah had her premiere, Lady GaGa was born... and no-one wanted a Pinot Noir from California, let alone Napa!

Pinot Noir grapes sold for just a few hundred dollars per ton back then (Cabernet and Chardonnay were selling for upwards of a thousand dollars) and most of it went into cheap blends or sparkling wine. Few people outside the industry could even pronounce the grape's name, calling it "Peanut Nor" or some such variation. There was simply no demand. But we forged ahead, breaking ground on our winery the year after our first vintage.

Then, a mustachioed young man came knocking on our construction shed door looking for a job... and we gave it to him. He was hard

working, detail oriented and full of spirit. He loved the craft of wine and intuitively understood the holistic nature of fine winegrowing. Jeff Virnig was the yin to my yang, the Cheech to my Chong, the Tellar to my Penn and the Watson to my Sherlock (now, it could be the other way around, because I forget who is who, but I'm sure Jeff could tell me!). If it were not for meeting Jeff at the beginning of this journey, I would not have had the fortitude to soldier on.

Pinot Noir became our muse and we looked upon her to make us better at everything. Fickle, she taunted, teased and challenged us to to learn what she would respond to. We took fact finding missions to Burgundy, studied organics and Biodynamics and experimented with cellar technique.

We watched pinot trends come and go, dabbling in some while ignoring others. The first technique to make a splash was known as the Guy Accad method whereas Pinot Noir was picked riper than was common for the day, doused with sulfur to hold fermentation and then cold soaked to extract as much flavor out of the grapes as possible. It made a splash in the late 80's with bold wines, but it was soon discovered that it masked terroir and compromised ageability.

Debates raged (over a bottle of Pinot Noir of course) as to how New World winemakers could best emulate the "je ne sais quoi" that is Burgundy. Some argued that *brettanomyces* (a microbial contaminant) defines them and if we could create a "good" strain, we could make a better "Burgundian" style Pinot Noir. One famous winemaker went far enough to discover that he couldn't control the creation or spread of a good or bad strain, so instead of adding elegant leathery complexity to his wines, he burdened several vintages with the aroma of horse manure.

We've weathered all the controversies: whether or not you should use stems or no stems; ambient or cultured yeast; pump-over, hand punch, cap-irrigate or sprinkle; wood, concrete, stainless steel, small box or egg shaped fermenters; micro-oxygenate, filter or not; or the latest trends: to pick super ripe fruit with corresponding high alcohols in the finished wine.

We discovered through all this that less is more and we continue to hold true to our original ideals, the same ones we set out to pursue twenty five years ago.

Jeff Virnig and I have spent nearly half our lives working together to make Pinot Noir we want to drink; elegant, balanced wines that go with the food on our table. We don't care what score the wine didn't get because we don't want to drink what is currently defined as a 96 point Pinot Noir. We prefer to work with nature, grow it well and do the minimal to make a classically proportioned Pinot Noir.

Twenty Five years used to seem like a long time, but now it seems like barely enough to become reasonably comfortable with the world's most fickle grape.