

ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

FOUR VINEYARDS, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY, 2012

A PERFECT CIRCLE PINOT NOIR



- CCOF Certified Organic Vineyards
- RSV owns and farms all vineyards
- No purchased fruit, RSV planted every vine
- 100% Pinot Noir
- Lot by lot selection for structure and expression
- Heirloom selections and French clones
- Barrel aged 12 months
- 100% French oak barrels, 30% new

WINE GROWING NOTES

The Four Vineyards Pinot Noir is a romantic vision. Culled from RSV's four organic vineyards on the Napa Valley side of the Carneros, these vineyards are planted with "heirloom" massal selections of Pinot Noir that have been refined by trial and error over the last thirty years. These heirlooms, in combination with late ripening French clones, provide the palette to create an elegant, balanced, and ethereal Pinot Noir.

The Four Vineyards span the Carneros from the Vandal Vineyard at the foothills of Mount Veeder to the Three Amigos Vineyard near the estuaries of San Francisco Bay. Each vineyard has its own distinct micro-climate and each selection of Pinot Noir on each site responds uniquely to vintage. RSV can then choose, from thirty-two different selections, the most expressive and complimentary in the creation of a "quietly powerful" Pinot Noir.

The antithesis of 2011, 2012 was one of the driest winters on record, saved only by a "March Miracle" spring rain. When the clouds cleared, it laid the groundwork for near perfect flowering conditions. The exceptional growing season culminated in just about perfect ripening weather that allowed for great concentration and flavor development with lower potential alcohols.

Each block was harvested at night and brought into the cellar at dawn. Destemmed, it either went into small, open top fermenters and was hand punched or into stainless steel tanks and cap irrigated. Most lots spontaneously fermented with feral yeast. Once each lot achieved dryness, it was put to bed in French oak barrels, both new and older (up to 3 years old), and aged in the RSV caves for one year.

WINE TASTING NOTES

The Four Vineyards Pinot Noir is conscientiously restrained. It doesn't scream, "look at me!" rather, it insinuates itself as it slowly opens in the glass, drawing you closer as it becomes a seductive dinner companion.

The difference between good and great Pinot Noir is about 45 minutes. When first poured, the wine is tight with aromas and flavors of earth, tea, and cedar, with a slight hint of rich red fruit. Ten minutes later, there's an abundance of red fruits - cherry, raspberry, and cranberry. A little more swirling in the glass reveals a complex blend of fruits, dried flower, and orange zest with a bright mouth watering structure backed by a core of firm tannin. We rarely recommend decanting Pinot Noir but, if this wine is to be consumed in the short term, a good decant will please the impatient.

FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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with all its contradictions!

History is full of contradictions. The French helped the fledgling American colonies kick some Redcoat butt during the revolutionary war, yet the Brits were the largest consumers of French wine. They liked it so much that they had to set sail in search of alternative sources to French wines, discovering Port in Oporto, Portugal. The Brits had such a voracious thirst for great vinous libations that the wine trade helped define modern shipping terminology and measures. A “ton” comes from the weight of a large (a “tunne”) barrel of wine and a “tierce” of wine defines the size of a modern barrel of oil. Even though the French were losing market share to the Portuguese, they spent the modern equivalent of thirteen billion dollars to defeat the British... but that could not keep the Brits away from great claret. They eventually returned to buy even more wine and, in some cases, the Chateau itself.

The French revolutionary slogan of “liberty, equality, fraternity” is a serial contradiction. They said they wanted everyone to be equal, yet their fraternity did not allow women to vote. Les Femmes had to fight for their rights. Today, some of the best French wine is produced by vigneronns who happen to be female.

Then there is that thing called Liberty... France has more rules controlling the production of wine than just about anywhere else. There is little freedom to experiment. Over time, regions became defined by a specific variety or a mix of varieties. It is illegal to plant something like Gamay in Côte-d’Or Burgundy where Pinot Noir is king — even though Beaujolais is not far down the autoroute and Gamay might arguably produce a better wine than Pinot Noir in some Côte-d’Or Burgundian locations!

Thomas Jefferson, while busy defining our individual freedoms and a life free of the shackles of the Old World, looked to traditional France for wine inspiration. Ignoring the local grape varieties that would have performed well in Virginia, Jefferson opted instead to grow the more challenging French vinifera that floundered and eventually failed several times over during his lifetime. Today, Virginia is making some pretty good wine using French selections of Bordeaux, Rhone and Burgundian varieties.

I am an American who enjoys his freedoms as much as anyone else, yet I too look to the restrictive Old World wine regions like France for vinous inspiration. Arguably, we Americans have too much freedom. The “all bets are off, we can do as we please” approach is very American... and very industrial. There is a school of thought that believes anything and everything should be done to make wine more predictably appealing to the masses. That might be a good idea if you are talking about affordable wines. However, sometimes you need to create restrictions to define a style and make a wine of character.

We are fortunate for the most part to have great weather to fully ripen our grapes almost every season. However, we need to find selections that struggle in our weather in order to synchronize maturation cycles with our growing season to maintain the natural acidity that gives a wine life. If the grapes sugar up too soon, we end up with sweet fat grapes that lack zing.

We choose to farm organically which forces us to be proactive in our approach yet, at the same time we must learn to manage acceptable losses and co-habitate with a small amount of pestilence.

The most important decision we make is to not do something. We do not ferment any grapes that we don’t grow ourselves. We choose to let the wine be what it wants to be - drawing the line at anything that would change its character. This usually means eschewing anything that would impart a foreign character on the grapes during fermentation like aromatic yeasts, sugar, concentrates, enzymes, coloring agents or artificial flavorings - all are forbidden in the RSV cellar. In addition, post fermentation manipulation, like de-alcoholization, is considered evil. A wine is the sum of its parts... in other words, a wine is defined by the characteristics imparted on it by the weather and the land.

We live in the modern world yet we choose inspiration from a time when technology was nonexistent. If we looked at things in reverse, if we were living in the past, would we choose technology to correct perceived problems in our wine? You betcha we would. However, we have the ability to look to the past and selectively embrace older techniques that we feel makes for more interesting wines. We have the luxury of having a choice to do or not do something. Sometimes it is the contradictions and hardships that define character... in this case, wine imitates life.

