

ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

CAPA VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY, 2013

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
- From the Capa Vineyard - on the Napa side of northern Carneros with a southwestern exposure
- Heirloom selections and French clones
- Barrel aged 12 months
- 100% French oak barrels, 30% new

Winegrowing Notes

Terroir is about place, weather and interpretation... and Pinot Noir is the perfect variety for capturing terroir. The Capa Vineyard, now entering its second quarter century, is at that stage where it struggles for viability. Some blocks produce just a half ton per acre, yet the grapes that do come off those struggling vines are producing wines of great depth and complexity. Unfortunately, the days are numbered for some of these vineyard blocks.

The vintage of 2013 was another drought year. Fortunately, ample rain in December of 2012 filled irrigation ponds but from January to March 2013 only two inches of rain fell, just a fraction of normal for that time of year. The dryer than normal conditions made for a nice balance of canopy and berry sizing for intensely flavored fruit with firm tannin. Hand harvested, the pristine fruit arrived at the cellar where it was destemmed and fermented on its native yeast. French barrel aged in the caves for one year, the wine spent another two years in the bottle before release.

Tasting Notes

Sundried sour cherry, spice, dried rose petal and hard red candy aromas are backed by notes of graphite, some would call it pencil shavings, and black tea. The wine is mouth watering as the aromas follow through to the flavors with the addition of tart spicy cranberry and orange peel. The wine is both supple and aggressive with firm tannin and a savory, never ending finish.

Stuff It! - by Maria Helm Sinskey

It seems a shame the only time most people focus on stuffing is during Thanksgiving. Think of the thousands of chickens roasted each day with barren cavities - a missed opportunity to capture the bird's delicious juices in the fragrant stuffing within. A bird with stuffing needs little more accompaniment than a simple green salad. Think of it, a bird, stuffing, salad and your meal is complete - almost. Add a bottle of the Capa Vineyard Pinot Noir with its scent of red berries, rose petals and tea and you're well on your way to the moon. Pinot Noir doesn't get a better match in my book than with a good roast chicken. Whether you slip black truffles under the skin or fill the middle with a flavor packed stuffing, a good roasted bird with all the accouterments is pure comfort. **Visit www.robertsinskey.com/kitchen for the *Roast Chicken with Wild Mushroom and Spring Onion Stuffing* recipe and other tempting originals by Maria Helm Sinskey.**

FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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and a little farmhouse in the Carneros!

A sense of longing overcame me every time I passed that backroads Carneros "farm." Really more of a junkyard than a farm, it had a quaint, dilapidated old house from the early 1900's, two listing barns and a cluster of outbuildings filled with cars and motorcycles in various states of disrepair, if not outright decay. It was on a long straightaway where most people wouldn't notice it as they stepped on the gas to shorten their commute, but I would slow down, take it in and wistfully say to myself that if it ever came up for sale, I would make it my home.

This routine continued for six years until, one day, a realty sign appeared and, by the end of the day, I had an appointment to walk the property. I was met by an old guy named Orvy who proudly showed me around. He had done, or not done, most of the work on the property himself. Some of the water pipes were nothing but garden hoses buried in the ground and the electrical for some of the sheds were wires also buried in the dirt with no conduit. I was surprised he had made it to the age he was, whatever that may be.

He was particularly pleased with some of his projects. As we rounded the corner past the two listing barns, a couple of matching Jaguars from the early sixties sat in a field, paint peeling from their tired bodies, tires rotting off the rims and weeds growing up through the floorboards and out through the missing windshields. Orvy leaned over to me as though we were two old buddies sitting on bar stools, gave me a jab with his elbow, shot me a wink and pointed to the two cars. "You see those Jags over there? They're ninety percent restored!" He exclaimed. Not wanting to destroy his delusion or sabotage a potential deal, I dutifully smiled and mumbled something like, "They sure are beauties!"

The next day, I hammered out an offer and, after navigating a few minefields and convincing Orvy to agree to remove all junk... uh, I mean, personal property, the fantasy turned into a reality.

I now had a future home and vineyard... I just needed to figure out the first steps. I knew I wanted to plant Pinot Noir and, since this would be the first vineyard I would plant (my father planted all our prior vineyards), I wanted something special. So, I "convinced" Winemaker Jeff Virnig and Chef Greg Cole to hop on a plane for a research trip to Burgundy. We made a list of producers who approached things in a more holistic fashion; organic or biodynamic farming was a prerequisite and a transparent hand in the cellar was a must.

One of the producers who impressed us was Anne Gros. She met us with her baby in her arms and instead of appearing like a lotion-slathered, doting mother, she stroked and quieted her baby with the weathered hands of a farmer. Anne showed us not only the wines she was proud of, but also the wines that were giving her problems. She was generally interested in our reaction and welcomed our insight that might help her resolve the issues with certain lots, yet when we asked specific technical questions she hissed, "You ask questions like an American!" We then knew our place and re-calibrated our priorities to respect the sanctity of site over science.

After tasting in the cellar, she took us to her Richebourg Grand Cru Vineyard with its one meter by one meter spacing and low trained vines. We could feel the magic of the place. While taking in the landscape, I realized the slope was similar to the mid-section of my new property in the Carneros. Primed by several bottles of wine over lunch, I presented an idea to my group. What if we emulated Anne Gros' Richebourg Vineyard in Carneros? We could acquire the same Dijon clone, plant it one meter by one meter and train the vines low to the ground. That way, we could compare apples to apples and know the full potential of the site. It didn't take too much convincing and the course was set.

The Capa Vineyard, as it became known, had its mid to lower slopes planted to two French clones, Dijon and Pommard, while the hillsides were planted to two heirloom selections known as Chalone and Hanzell.

We quickly discovered that we weren't in Burgundy anymore. Though the vineyard was beautiful, with vigorous growth in the meter by meter Dijon block, it ripened too quickly, developing sugar before becoming physiologically ripe, forcing our hand to let it get overripe for flavor. Now the heirlooms, on the other hand, were having the opposite reaction to the site. They had low vigor with sparse, almost yellowish canopies, low yields, longer hang time and developed their physiological maturity, or flavor, in sync with sugar development.

We had to rethink our assumptions. Just because we did things the same way as a specific site in Burgundy did not mean we would end up with a wine that tasted like a Richebourg. What we got instead was a California Pinot Noir on steroids with big juicy fruit and high alcohol, just the kind of wine that was receiving high scores in the nineties, but not what we considered elegant, complex and age worthy Pinot Noir. We were schooled, rather expensively, on the lesson of terroir - the idea that fine wine is a reflection of site, weather and human interpretation.

The goals of a Burgundian vigneron are at odds with the priorities of a California Pinot Noir winegrower. Whereas they desire a clone that ripens earlier with lower acidity, we require a selection that ripens later in our sun-driven environment, developing less sugar while maintaining as much acidity as possible. So we pulled out every other row of the meter by meter Dijon clone Pinot Noir - reducing the vine density and allowing it to slow down a little.

Meanwhile, on the top of the hill, the heirlooms were struggling with naturally low vigor and low yields, but Pinot Noir does best when it struggles and, particularly after the vines reached fifteen or so years, the wine produced from those vines became the elegant, balanced and structured Pinot Noir we had anticipated from the initial planting of the meter by meter Dijon block.

Now, restructured with a spacing of one by two meters, twenty plus years later, the Dijon clone is producing a wine that is closer to our original dream and, blended with the Pommard and heirlooms, makes for one gorgeous wine of place.