

ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

# CABERNET SAUVIGNON

VANDAL VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2006



- From RSV's Northern Carneros "Vandal Vineyard" Near the Foothills of Mt. Veeder
- CCOF Certified Organic Vineyard
- Demeter Certified Biodynamic Vineyard
- Cool Maritime Growing Region Influenced by the San Pablo Bay
- Heat Summation Comparable to St. Emilion
- Cave Aged 19 Months in French Oak
- 30% New Barrels for Subtlety
- 57 Barrels Produced

TA: 6.2 g/l pH: 3.56 Alc: 13.9%

## WINEGROWING NOTES

One of my favorite catch phrases in wine is "International Style." International implies exotic, unique, foreign and sophisticated. Instead, at least in the wine world, it means manufactured, blatant and without place. It relies more on technique than terroir.

An international style Cabernet Sauvignon boasts high alcohols, low acidity and ultra-ripe, almost obnoxiously sweet fruit. I have experienced this style of wine from Spain, Italy, France, Australia, South Africa and yes, Napa Valley. I dislike these wines. They lack grace, elegance, finesse and character. More importantly, they do not pair well with cuisine. Most do not deserve the price they command and they erode the very foundation of wine's appeal as a unique product of place and grape. If the apogee of wine is something that can be duplicated anywhere with a modest degree of technical aptitude, then what separates wine from a simple commodity?

RSV's small production Vandal Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is local, not "international." Biodynamically grown in the relatively cool, marine influenced Carneros region of Napa Valley, it proudly flaunts bright acidity and understated, elegant structure. Appropriately youthful and tight knit, it's just the kind of wine that

will take you on a journey over the course of a meal or after years in the cellar.

The cool Carneros region allows the grapes more days on the vine, on the way to relatively modest sugar levels, as compared to grapes grown in warmer areas. The long, cool growing season and increased hangtime build more developed flavors, while the lower sugars make for a wine with naturally tame alcohol levels. This site-specific Cabernet Sauvignon flaunts depth, structure and vibrant, mouthwatering acidity making for a cuisine friendly and age worthy wine.

## TASTING NOTES

Youthful pride shows in the wine's luxurious purple velvet color. Aromas justify the color's richness with classic varietal scents of dark berries and currants. Behind the fruit lurk notes of herbs, chocolate, coffee and the slightest trace of capsicum, a hallmark of Cabernet Sauvignon. A sip brings both red and black currants to join the sweet herbs on a generous silky texture, while a refreshing edge provides balance and contrast. Flavors broaden and linger unhurriedly on a taut but supple canvas, expertly knit by ripe, polished tannins.

## FINE WINES FROM ORGANIC VINES

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# THE CONVENTIONAL PARADOX!



## IN FARMING, CONVENTION IS NOT TRADITION...

Conventional farming” is a misnomer! The phrase sounds so sure and true, it’s difficult to call into question. Who can argue with a method of farming termed “conventional?” I assume that is the intent: to confuse farmers and the public with the impression that other methods are alternative, radical or fringe.

Conventional is defined as “conforming to established practice or accepted standards; traditional.” By co-opting this adjective and using it to whitewash chemical farming, it is implied that this method of farming is the accepted standard. Never mind that this “convention” began as a commercial solution for surplus chemicals of war.

After WWI, the farm became a repository for excess bomb building nitrogen. Then, during the post WWII “Green Revolution” (an Orwellian turn of phrase if there ever was one), the dalliance between agriculture and chemical companies became a marriage of commerce and the new “conventional farm” was born.

In those days, organic farmers had little time for organizations and lacked the resources to hire lobbyists, lawyers and PR firms. They conceded the high ground years ago by allowing chemical farmers to call themselves conventional. Without a nifty title for their “traditional” style of farming, they became typecast and marginalized. If “conventional” meant “conservative,” “American” or “right,” then “organic” meant “hippie,” “commie” or “wrong.”

Over the years, conventional farmers offered populist spin to help keep organics down. They claimed that organic farming could not feed the world’s growing population, that it would drive up food costs and that organic produce offers no additional nutritional benefit. None of these accusations are true.

Externalized costs and subsidies keep food prices artificially low and undermine smaller, local family farms. It is cheaper for a Mexican family to buy heavily subsidized imported corn than it is to grow their own and sell it in their community. The artificially low cost of conventionally farmed corn competes with a local economy, reducing the number of family farms, and further restricting the food supply. This situation repeats itself throughout the third world. Many products could be successfully farmed locally, if a local economy existed for them.

Organic food is currently pricier than conventional food due more to marketing than actual hard cost. The perception of organic food as elitist creates a price premium. Supply and demand will straighten this out. As more farms convert to organics and a wider range of consumers increase demand,

prices will fall. However, don’t overlook the upside of higher food prices. A little increase in revenue is all that it might take for a smaller local farm, with a less efficient but more diversified and integrated approach, to stay profitable.

Furthermore, progressive farmers incur significantly lower externalized costs, such as pollution. Low prices for conventional produce are false if we and future generations end up paying for the environmental damage conventional practices leave behind.

Several conflicting studies debate whether the nutritional content of food depends on the method of farming. Obviously, the studies funded by agri-business tend to find in favor of the conventional, while those funded by organic and Biodynamic interests find in favor of their methods. In the latter instance, produce with the highest nutritional content comes from Biodynamic farms, followed by organic and then conventional. The most convincing study shows the cell structure of biodynamic produce to be more substantial than conventional. Though I would like to be a complete believer, there might be other forces at work here than just the general farming method. Biodynamic and high quality organic farms tend to be more localized and are able to get their produce to market shortly after harvest. They can pick closer to optimum ripeness, replete with better flavor and nutritional value. In this case, the proximity of the farm to market is an important factor.

Now, bad organic produce certainly exists. Some farms practice “organics by neglect” or “Organics, Inc.” resulting in inferior produce. These farms use the word organic cynically, and their operations resemble the industrial food chain. Their produce is no better, and often worse, in nutrition and flavor than their conventional counterparts. My guess is that any study suggesting that conventional produce offers the same nutritional content as organic used these lesser organic products in comparison.

Fortunately, organics has achieved critical mass with skyrocketing demand among the educated populations of the world. If enough people continue to support organics, even in hard times, then it will continue to build momentum and trickle down to all economic strata and become a right for all, not just a privilege for the few.

“The three cornerstones of sustainability are ecological soundness, economic viability and social justice,” said John Ikerd of the University of Missouri. We all play a part in sustainability, whether directly through farming or indirectly as consumers. What’s more, the consumers play the most powerful role as their choices will determine the viability, profitability and type of farm that will feed us in the future.

–Rob Sinskey

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