

ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

PINOT NOIR, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2015



- CCOF Certified Organic Vineyards
- 100% Pinot Noir
- Heirloom selections and French clones
- 19 separately harvested and vinified lots
- From all five of RSV's Los Carneros vineyards
- Cave aged 12 months in French oak
- 30% new barrels for subtlety
- 183 barrels produced
- Bottled in 375ml and 750ml formats

Winegrowing Notes

They say that the concept of terroir is the convergence of soil, climate and human interpretation/intervention. The soil is a relative constant - that is, the basic structure - all RSV can do to improve the soil is farm with an organic methodology to enrich it with organic material. Lately, the climate has been less predictable as human activity continues to contribute to climate change. Managing and preparing for extremes has become standard practice.

The vintage of 2015 was another drought year that started with an unseasonably warm January. Over four inches of rain fell in February followed by the driest March on record resulting in the lowest snowpack level ever recorded. The vintage was saved by a half an inch of rain in April.

The combination of drought and cool weather led to an uneven set of smaller berries with thicker skins and overall lower yields. Harvest came early - it was the first time in the history of the winery that all white varieties and Pinot Noir were picked before the second week of September. All the Pinot Noir was picked at night for two reasons - the vineyard workers prefer the cool night hours and the fruit benefits from the night temperatures. Picking at night helps the fruit maintain freshness and acidity as it meets its maker on the crush pad first thing in the morning.

Each individual lot of Pinot Noir (there were 19 individually fermented lots of Pinot Noir comprising 11 different heirloom selections and clones) is gently fermented on native yeast with a technique that best suits the individual lot. Once the wine is fermented dry, it is moved to the cave where it rests in 30% new French oak barrels for a year.

Tasting Notes - by Jeff Virnig and Phil Abram

This vintage of RSV's Los Carneros Pinot Noir excites the senses the moment it hits the glass. Rich, classic Carneros Pinot Noir notes of perfectly ripened raspberry, Bing cherry, rhubarb, strawberry jam, rose and forest herbs... a true interpretation of the year's dry, warm conditions. The first sip reveals a wine with an Old World soul that is food-friendly with an age-worthy structure. It is balanced by a New World preciseness that highlights the impeccable red fruit. The fruit feels more fresh and textured than the aromas would suggest with crisp cranberry, pomegranate and blood orange adding lift to a bright and juicy mid-palate that leads to a long finish marked by the balance of savory, complex, supple-tannins and mouth-watering brightness.

FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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Napa has never been Pinot Country. It wasn't even Cab Country when RSV's vineyards were planted in 1982. Napa was much more diverse in those days. If a king of reds existed in the '70's and 80's, it was more likely Zinfandel than any other grape. Back in the '80's, Cab was planted next to Chenin Blanc, Riesling next to Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc next to Gamay Rouge, Muscat Canelli adjacent to Barbera, Muscat Rouge, Sangiovese, Grignolino... There even was a lawsuit between two wineries with similar names that was settled when one selected Petite Sirah as their signature red and the other selected Cabernet Sauvignon. We now know who was more prescient.

Even with all the diversity, the small plantings of Pinot Noir, in all reaches of the Valley, held special intrigue. Though it is arguable who brought the first selections of Pinot Noir to the Napa/Sonoma corridor in the 1880's, many credit - Colonel Agoston Haraszthy de Mokesa, founder of Buena Vista Winery in the Carneros, as one of three potential pioneers of Pinot Noir. The selections brought in by the colorful Colonel would propagate vineyards throughout the region with some legendary results... the most remarkable was the 1946 Beaulieu Pinot Noir, a benchmark wine for Pinot Noir from California crafted by Andre Tchelistcheff, who told me before he died that it was the greatest wine he ever made.

It is by no mistake that Pinot Noir vineyards have consolidated in the cooler southern part of Napa where the marine influence moderates the climate... not-too-hot and not-too-cold for an expressive wine. Sure there were/are interesting wines made in the hills, with names like School House, Mayacamas and El Molino... old plantings that helped keep heirloom selections of Pinot Noir in production. At one time, almost every winery in Napa Valley had some form of Pinot Noir in bottle, but one by one, they ripped out vines and planted to the more lucrative and adaptive Cabernet Sauvignon.

If it weren't for the pioneers... even if some of the original plantings were not as successful as others, we would not have the genetic material that makes up a good percentage of RSV Pinot Noir. Don't get me wrong, some French clones brought in from nurseries can be an interesting addition. However, it is the heirlooms in our little part of Pinot Country in the Carneros region of Napa that makes RSV Pinot Noir distinct. The historic heirlooms seem better adapted to the local climate, ripening later than many of the French clones while maintaining better acidity, freshness and complexity... and it is nice to imagine a thread running from the 1800's to today in the latest release of RSV's Los Carneros Pinot Noir.

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

Mushrooms, chicken, duck, squab, wild feathered things, pork and, for good measure, an occasional rabbit - These ingredients had a tradition for going along for the ride with Pinot Noir. And a good ride it was until it crossed over to things that live in the sea. This pained me a bit because many times it wasn't really the fish that went with the wine but all the things that swaddled the fish above, below and to the side. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. The one fish that always struck me as a good fit was a good fatty chunk of wild salmon. There is an earthiness to salmon that works with a nicely balanced pinot noir. This same earthiness, or as the French call it *sous bois*, lives in Pinot Noir. Add in lentils, also earthy, kissed with smoky bacon and you've got a dish that sings with RSV's Los Carneros Pinot Noir. Some folks might say pairing fish with Pinot Noir is like swimming upstream but in this case I beg to differ.

Until the Next Wine....

Maria

Visit www.robertsinskey.com/kitchen for the *Seared King Salmon with Smoky Green Lentils and Endive Salad* recipe and other tempting originals by Maria Helm Sinskey.

