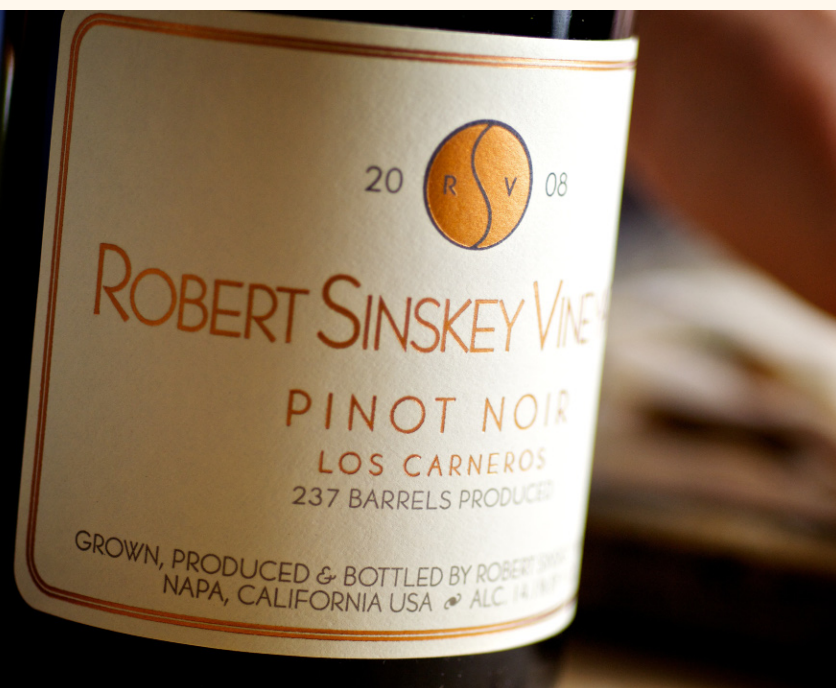


ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS

PINOT NOIR

LOS CARNEROS, 2008



- 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
- Harvest Date Range: 8/25 - 9/19
- Cave Aged 10 Months in French Oak
- 30% New Barrels for Subtlety
- 237 Barrels Produced

TA: 6.1 g/l pH: 3.6 Alc: 14.1%

WINEGROWING NOTES

If anything worth doing is challenging, then the 2008 vintage was particularly worthwhile. The reservoirs on the vineyards filled up a bit more than the previous winter, but 2008 was the second year of drought. Then came the frosts. Debby Zygielbaum, vineyard manager, lost a lot of sleep to frost alarms in the wee hours. The coldest spring in thirty years had her on frost alert every night for over a month! Frost after budding can kill the tender young shoots, decimating the crop. In spring 2008, it occurred in places that never saw frost pressure before. Debby and her crew's efforts minimized the damage, but some crop was lost. Drought and frost contributed to low yields, the sort that make the accountant nervous, though nature makes recompense with high quality and concentration.

Nail biting continued as wildfires raged up and down the North Coast, but RSV's Carneros Vineyards were never at risk. Onshore winds from the San Pablo Bay pushed the threat of smoke taint out of the area, however it did filter the light a bit and made for

slower sugar development in the crop, but that's a good thing.

The fires died down about mid-summer, and July and early August were unusually mild, allowing slow and even fruit development. The heat arrived in the latter half of August, pushing sugars aggressively, but then quickly subsided, allowing for a relatively slow paced harvest of fruit with beautiful balance of sugars, ripe tannins and acidity. Small clusters, tiny berries and commensurately high skin-to-juice ratios produced intense and concentrated wines.

Jeff Virnig, RSV's winemaker for over two decades, said tannin management was foremost on his mind, so the cellar crew de-stemmed the bunches and left the rollers open wide on the crusher to encourage a good population of whole berries in the tanks. These whole berries extend the fermentation process, aerate the ferment, minimize harsh tannins, and emphasize berry character. Pressed off after fermentation, the wine rested in 30% new French oak barrels for about 10 months before bottling.

FINE WINES FROM ORGANIC VINES

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GLORY DAYS...

AND THE ENDLESS QUEST FOR ELEGANT PINOT NOIR

“Why can’t Napa make wines like these anymore!” came the moan like one, big communal sigh. With one sip, we’d become a bunch of old farts reminiscing over the glory days.

Let me set the stage. In the room that night was a major grape grower, a vineyard manager who makes an acclaimed wine, a successful vintner/importer/negotiant, respective spouses, Maria and myself. Dinner was a wonderfully casual affair of mushroom strudel, steak, corn, salad, veggies etc. The bottles that stimulated the conversation, however, were not so casual.

The wines were twelve to fifteen years old ... and they were beautiful! They had well developed fruit with herbal notes, good acidity and balance. No fruit bombs, no barrel show-offs, just elegant wines that instilled a desire to revisit the glass, paying attention to how the wine evolved and opened during dinner.

So the question: If these wines were so good, why was Napa and the New World in general (now I know this is a broad net and there are exceptions ... like those sitting at the table) making wines that were stylistically too similar to each other with sweet jammy fruit, low acid, and too much wood, making them less than pleasurable at the table?

It seems as though we are suffering from group psychosis. As vintners enter the wine industry from other disciplines (my family included) they have one directive: Make world class wines! Most have little practical knowledge of how to achieve or measure that goal. The simplest route is to hire a top winemaking consultant and vineyard manager and let them work their “magic” - which means apply a proven formula that will result in measurable returns like high scores from the major publications. It does not matter if they like their own wine so long

as it garners acclaim. As one property achieves “success” the neighbors want to emulate it by copying the formula and, before long, we have edited out the distinctive qualities that make a wine special and unique.

Pinot Noir, if anything, is about distinctiveness, and distinctiveness doesn’t happen by formula. Producing a classically structured Pinot Noir requires diversity and a willingness to flirt with adversity. Diversity requires a nice mix of clones and heirloom selections that respond to the land and climate in different ways, layering subtle hints of herb and fruit notes into an elegant melange of flavors and textures. Adversity comes by way of finding the edge of a climate zone and fighting to maintain balance. If the grape’s sugar ripens too early in the season, it will be too fat and flabby by the time it develops flavor. However, if it develops slowly, inducing a little nail biting at the end of the season, then it will maintain structure, resulting in a wine that will tantalize and evolve.

So how do we get vintners to change course? We don’t. We just keep doing things the good “old-fashioned” way and hope the new community of opinion leaders and savvy consumers will initiate a paradigm shift with a new perception of what defines good wine.

-Rob Sinsky

TASTING NOTES

Bright, gem-like translucent ruby color tumbles into the glass, as classic Pinot Noir aromas of berries, earth and spice leap towards the nose. Ripe tannins weave an elegant texture, soft and velvety, that holds beautiful flavors of dark cherry, cranberry, vanilla, sweet herbs, forest floor, and exotic spice. The wine finds incredible balance between flavors, tannins and acidity, making it a fantastic dinner companion.

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