

ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

Pinot Gris

LOS CARNEROS, 2010



- Grown in RSV's Three Amigos Vineyard, Los Carneros, Napa Valley
- Certified Organic (CCOF) & Biodynamic (Demeter) Vineyards
- Delicate whole-cluster pressed fruit
- Fermented dry
- No barrels for a clean, pure and focused wine
- Elegant glass stoppered 750ml bottles

Cases Produced: 987 TA: 6.8 g/l pH: 3.28 Alc: 13.7%

WINEGROWING NOTES

A night harvest helps make fresh, bright wines with crisp acidity. Harvesting Pinot Gris ahead of sunrise reduces the risk of splitting, spoilage, oxidation and premature fermentation as the cool, firm grapes arrive at the cellar in top condition.

Upon arrival, the cellar crew loads the press with whole clusters of Pinot Gris, gently coaxing the juice from the grapes, extracting the goodness while avoiding potentially bitter compounds that can come from the skins, stems and seeds. The juice is held at a low temperature for a couple of days to settle out solids before a long, cool fermentation in stainless steel tanks. No oak, no induced malolactic fermentation.

The wine is from a single block of RSV's certified Biodynamic and organic Three Amigos Vineyard in southern Carneros. A mere 987 cases were produced of the 2010 vintage.

TASTING NOTES

Brilliant platinum blonde color and clean, true aromas of melon, ginger-spiced pear and apple blossom exemplify purity. Upon a sip, aromas expand into vibrant flavors, bright and youthful, with a delicate touch of floral perfume and almonds. The wine snaps with citrus-like crispness rarely seen in a New World white, contrasted with a richness that makes for one satisfyingly mouth-watering wine. It is ready for the table now, and will surprise when resurrected from the cellar several years down the road.



FINE WINES FROM ORGANIC VINES

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FREEDOM OF CHOICE



OR FREEDOM FROM CHOICE!

We've devolved. We have more freedom, choice and opportunity than ever before; but with freedom comes responsibility. Just because we can use technology to control and manipulate, should we? Modern tools and scientific knowledge allow the manipulation of any product, including wine, to fit perceived demand. You know - give the people what they want ... it's ironic that because of choice, we have an abundance of indistinguishable mediocrity.

Traditionally, agricultural products were unique to their region. The special attributes of a farm, complete with natural limitations, defined place; while tradition informed technique. It was not about market analysis or the style of wine preferred in China, but about what worked best on a particular piece of land.

We almost didn't produce a Pinot Gris. Not many people realize it, but Pinot Gris (including Pinot Grigio) is the most popular white wine in the USA. A lot of the Pinot Grigios are characterless chasers of fritto misto - a wine best served cold over gossip or as a wedding party social lubricant. Many of these wines come from overcropped vineyards and manipulative cellars, engineered for those who prefer mineral water with a buzz.

On the opposite end of the stylistic spectrum is the New World version, tasting more like Chardonnay-lite, made with very ripe (high sugar) fruit that converts to a wine with low acid and high alcohol; dolled up with lots of wood, it makes a perfect substitution for the cocktail, but a lousy companion at the table.

In contrast to the other two styles are the Pinot Gris of Alsace where - unless it is a large, commercial producer making wine for a specific market - the land and weather determines style, and diversity is the name of the game. Some are a little sweet with residual sugar, some are dry and some are riddled with "noble rot," for a sublime dessert wine. The best shun manipulation and allow the distinctiveness of vintage to define the wine. Buying a Pinot Gris from Alsace is a gamble without knowledge of the vigneron's intent. You may end up with a sweeter wine than intended, but the character of the wine usually exceeds expectations.

We weren't sure we wanted to throw our hat into this arena of confusion, but the land did the talking and convinced us otherwise. We first planted Pinot Gris in the Carneros as a component of Abraxas, RSV's Vin de Terroir, then under contract for another winery. Our first few years of working with the grape

were scary; we were less than thrilled with the results but we were still surfing the learning wave. Pinot Gris is an early ripening variety that wants to sugar up before flavors develop. The trick is to encourage an environment that is less vigorous, with vines that are lower yielding, in order to find sugar synchronicity with flavor development, bringing the grapes in while they still have natural acidity. The cool Carneros is a natural fit for the Pinot Gris grape. The long, cool growing season allows such synchronicity, but we had to learn patience by letting the vine do its thing, gain a little maturity (the vine and us) and discover its strength. After about five vintages, we began to realize its potential. We got so excited that we bemoaned the fact that the Pinot Gris planted on the Three Amigos Vineyard was promised to another winery. Fate and the economy intervened and we once again regained control.

The Carneros is not Alsace. Though they share a similar heat summation, they have different weather patterns. Los Carneros is a Region I growing area (as classified by the Winkler scale) which means it is cool, but it rarely rains during the summer. The early summer is usually very cool and the late summer and early fall are, many years, quite warm. What this translates to is a grape that develops slowly, sugaring later in the vintage as complex flavors evolve and then, as harvest nears, finishes off ... flavors in sync with sugar and lots of nice bright acidity left intact. The wines are dry with crispness and richness that make for a perfect dinner companion, and also allow a potential for the wine to develop character as it ages.

Now, I have voiced some generalities that don't always hold true. Opinions carry with them some some risk of contradiction. There are wonderful producers all over the world who let the vineyard be their guide. I have singled out Italy and the New World only because more producers in these regions are concerned with appealing to a critic or selling thousands of cases of wine than other regions. If I were a large producer, I might have a different perspective, but, then again, I would not be in this game if that were my only choice.

It is just as important to know what not to do than fix something because you can. I don't want to give the people what they want. I want to give them something that is true and pure - something that we are proud of! I am proud of this Pinot Gris. Perhaps freedom of choice is a good thing after all.

-Rob Sinskey