



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

PINOT NOIR, THREE AMIGOS VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY 2015





THOUGHT FOR FOOD...

by Rob Sinskey

and wine!

“Don’t write about climate change, no one wants to hear about it when they’re trying to enjoy their wine!” - advised a well-meaning individual. She has a point. Wine is about pleasure. It helps us escape the pressures of daily life as we enjoy a meal with friends and family. It can be a cheap vacation, transporting us to another time and place as we pop a bottle complemented by foods from other lands. It is an affordable luxury.

But I can’t look away while Napa and the planet burn. This June and July set records as the two hottest months in the recorded history of the world. There is no longer a question of whether or not human activity is contributing to climate change and there is no longer a question of when the impacts of climate change will be felt. The wine industry is already feeling it and agriculture as a whole must do more to educate themselves, change their practices and take steps to over-compensate for the inevitable harm they do. Then, it is a matter of transparency so the customer can make a choice because, in a capitalist society, the customer wields the power of the pocketbook. It is a power that can transform agriculture, industry and even governments.

There was a recent article in the San Francisco Chronicle about the impact of climate change on the wine industry and how some wineries and growers are planning for a hotter future by experimenting with new, old varieties of grapes and/or unique combinations of clones and rootstocks to create a grapevine that can thrive in a hotter climate with more erratic weather extremes. Though I think it great that they are planning for a hotter dystopian future, the article ignored that they can be part of the problem. They need to address and fix the practices that contribute to climate change and become an example for the world.

We have a megaphone. We have an opportunity to broadcast that we care and we can make a difference. I have said before and will repeat until I am red in the face that it is our responsibility to practice “guilt-free hedonism” and do no harm while we produce our luxurious bottle of escapism. The alcohol industry slogan of “Drink Responsibly” should mean more than awareness of the effects of alcohol on an individual’s body and should include awareness of the farming and production methods that impact the planet.

Winegrowing Notes

The Three Amigos Vineyard is RSV's oldest vineyard. Not only was it RSV's first vineyard, it was RSV's first vineyard to be converted to organic practices almost three decades ago. The goal of going organic was multi-dimensional. Of course the primary goal was to produce a better wine - and do so without inflicting harm on the planet and those living near the vineyard. RSV's winemaker postulated that if the effects of climate change were inevitable, practices should be employed to sequester carbon and increase the organic content of the soil. That process - now called regenerative agriculture - helps create a sturdy, less-vigorous vine that can hold up to extremes in weather.

Planted with chosen heirloom selections and French clones of Pinot Noir, the Three Amigos Vineyard became RSV's school of higher education as it was converted to organics during the time of the phylloxera epidemic. It also provided a foundational reference point for clonal selection as the original Pinot Noir vines were from California heirlooms. What was learned on the Three Amigos Vineyard was applied to all of RSV's almost 200 acres of vineyards over six locations - five in in Napa and one in Sonoma.

This cuvée was crafted from five heirloom selections and three clones grown on the three adjacent vineyards known together as the Three Amigos Vineyard in the cool southern reaches of the Carneros region.

The fourth year of the drought rendered numerous small, compact clusters. Hand harvested at night and delivered cool to the cellar door in the early am, the grapes were de-stemmed and fermented on natural yeasts. Due to the drought, the smaller berries and thicker skins led to a higher skin to flesh ratio that delivered concentrated flavors with firm acidity and tannins. The wine was aged in about 30% new French Oak in the RSV caves for almost one year to produce an elegant and exceptional bottle of wine.

Tasting Notes

A California classic that exemplifies the marriage of the cool Carneros climate combined with the depth of the 2015 vintage. Yields may have been low but the quality and texture overcompensate to make for a sublime wine. Ripe black cherry, strawberry, red plum and raspberry highlight an array of delicious red fruits while violet and rose lend a floral character backed by earthy notes, fennel, pencil lead, sandalwood and cinnamon. The initial juiciness gives way to well integrated tannins and mouthwatering acidity that drive home a long finish. This vintage of the Three Amigos Vineyard Pinot Noir has bones for the long-haul... if you can resist the temptation for the instant gratification it provides now.

The equivalent of 462 cases produced for 924 - six bottle cases.





LIGHTEN UP

I host a lot of wine dinners around the country. Sometimes I cook, sometimes I work with chefs to create a menu and sometimes I let them have free rein to create what they want to accompany the RSV wines.

When we reach the meat course, especially if lamb is on the menu, most Chefs or Sommeliers lean towards Cabernet Franc or Cabernet Sauvignon. It would seem that a full-flavored red meat such as lamb would make sense with a bigger red, but many times lamb needs something lighter in body, higher-toned and bright to cut through the full flavor and provide contrast to the rich meat. This is where Pinot Noir fills in nicely. It has enough body to stand up to lamb but also has nice acidity and lighter tannins that lighten a lamb dish rather than weigh it down.

The spices in this lamb shoulder meet the cherry and soft berry flavors of RSV's Three Amigos Pinot Noir head on. The proximity of the Three Amigos Vineyards to the bay preserves the freshness and acidity of the grapes. Another boost to break through the richness of the braise. Add a freshly baked pita bread or two and you have a pretty much perfect meal.

Next time you prepare lamb, reach for Pinot Noir instead of Cabernet.

Until the Next Wine....

Maria

SPICED LAMB SHOULDER WITH CHICKPEAS

You could easily use a boneless shoulder for this braise however braising it on the bone makes the dish and its juices more flavorful. The chickpeas make a light alternative to starchy sides like rice and potatoes and are a nice foil to the richly flavored lamb. To round out the lightness of the meal serve with a bright lemony salad. Serves 6 to 8

5 to 6 pound bone in lamb shoulder
2½ tablespoons Spice Mix, recipe follows
Kosher salt
4 large garlic cloves, smashed
1 medium yellow onion, peeled and thinly sliced
Extra virgin olive oil
1 cup dry garbanzo

1 teaspoon baking soda
½ cup whole peeled tomatoes in their juices
1 medium bay leaf
1 tablespoon date molasses
Freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon chopped flat leaf parsley

1. Loosen meat from the bones. Run a knife along the ribs and shoulder blade to expose the bones but do not separate the meat completely from the bones. You only want to open up the shoulder so that the spices and salt permeate interior as well as exterior. At the last rib closest to the curve of the neck bone you will find a large chunk of fat that contains glands. The glands are gray and jelly-like. Cut out the pocket of fat and the glands.
2. In a large bowl mix all of the spice mix with 3 tablespoons of kosher salt. Add the garlic and the lamb shoulder. Rub the lamb well getting the mix into the pockets of meat that you've cut from the bone. Place shoulder in a non-reactive dish and distribute the onions evenly over and under the meat. Cover well and marinate overnight in the refrigerator.
3. Place the garbanzo beans in a medium non-reactive bowl and add enough cold water to cover by 2 inches. Stir in the baking soda to dissolve. Cover and refrigerate overnight. The baking soda will soften the husk of the chickpeas and allow them to be silky smooth when pureed.
4. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Ready a large Dutch oven or similar covered baking dish.
5. Remove the lamb from the marinade. Brush off the garlic and onions and reserve.
6. Remove the chickpeas from the refrigerator. Pour into a strainer to drain the soaking water in the sink and rinse with cool water.
7. Add the chickpeas to the Dutch oven or similar covered pot. Add the tomato, the reserved garlic, onion and the bay leaf.
8. Place a large saute pan over medium high heat. Add enough olive oil to coat bottom of pan. Add the lamb shoulder and brown all over, about 8 to 10 minutes. Reduce heat if the pan gets too hot and starts to smoke.
9. Place the seared lamb shoulder on top and add 4 cups of cold water. Bring the pot to a boil. Cover and place in the pre-heated oven.
10. Braise for 4 to 5 hours until the meat is tender and falls away from bones when pressed with a fork.
11. Remove the shoulder from the braise and place on a rack over a sheet pan. Strain the braising juices into a saucepan. Reserve the vegetables and chickpeas. Remove the bay leaf and discard. Increase the oven temperature to 450 degrees F.
12. Mix ½ cup of the braising juices with 1 tablespoon of date molasses in a small pan. Bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer until liquid is reduced by half. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
13. Brush the lamb shoulder well with the half of the glaze. Get into all the nooks and crannies. Place in the oven for 15 to 20 minutes until the glaze is caramelized and the lamb has a crisp crust. Remove from the oven and brush with the remaining glaze.
14. Place the drained chickpeas in a blender along with ¼ cup olive oil. Blend until very smooth. Loosen with a little of the braising juices if necessary. Consistency should be like hummus. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
15. Swipe chickpeas across the bottom of a serving plate. Pull chunks of lamb off the bone and place on top of chickpea puree. Sprinkle with parsley. Serve braising juices on the side.

SPICE MIX

Similar to the Baharat mix from The Spanish Table

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon ground fennel
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon Marash or Aleppo Chile flake





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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