



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

ABRAXAS, VIN DE TERROIR, SCINTILLA SONOMA VINEYARD, LOS CARNEROS

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WEED OUT!

By Rob Sinskey

Can agriculture help change modern, western medicine for the better? It can if agriculture embraces regenerative farming techniques, medical schools teach agriculture as preventative medicine and insurance companies see the value in addressing nutrition and exposure to toxins instead of paying the cost of chronic food related illnesses.

I recently attended the Rodale Institute “Regenerative Healthcare Conference,” co-sponsored by the Robert M. Sinskey Foundation. The goal was to teach medical practitioners that agriculture can make a difference to their patients. The subtitle of the conference was “The Power of the Plate,” exploring topics that included: How regenerative farming practices can heal both people and planet, scientific side by side farming trials comparing regenerative practices with conventional and the affect on nutrient density, food as medicine, and glyphosate and its effect on children’s health. Though I found all of the topics interesting and inspiring, the last one was a major call to arms.

Three decades ago, Jeff Virnig and I decided we would transition away from toxic farm chemistry and carbon releasing farm practices. We made unscientific assumptions that glyphosate, the common ingredient in weed killer, was a carcinogen and it made no sense to create a luxury product at the cost of the health of those who grew, made and consumed it. What I did not know at the time was how pervasive glyphosate would become and how many ills would be linked to it; recent studies suggest autism, lower IQ, inflammation, fatty liver disease and kidney problems, to name a few. Almost all “conventionally” grown agricultural products contain residual amounts of glyphosate. It is so pervasive that it can be found in penguins in the Antarctic.

Glyphosate will soon be banned for home use but not for commercial agricultural use. This omission is a crime. We observed that the weed killer also destroyed all life in the soil... the microbiome...while also disrupting natural processes and creating a dependence on inputs for the plants to survive. We did not know that it also disrupts our micro-biome as we consume it.

What I learned: Glyphosate was patented in 1964 as a chelator for the removal of unwanted chemical deposits in pipes. It was soon discovered that its activity as a chelator gave it herbicidal properties; it was patented in 1974 as an herbicide. Then it was discovered that glyphosate had antimicrobial properties. In 2010 a patent was granted for glyphosate as an antibiotic.

The world depends on microbes for both soil and human health, yet the most commonly used farm chemical destroys bacteria in the earth and bacteria in those who consume it. This is the single most important reason to demand that everything you and your family consume is at least organically farmed. We must vote with our pocketbooks to remove glyphosate from the food chain.

Forever yours in guilt-free hedonism, Rob Sinskey



Winegrowing Notes

Abraxas is a dance with nature. It rejects science-based winemaking and instead embraces the craft of winegrowing. Four grapes - Riesling, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer - grow side by side on RSV's organically farmed Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard. Each variety is hand picked at night at each variety's peak expression, cool fermented separately and then blended to create a wine of character with stunning aromatics and mineral nerve. It is naturally delicious.

Tasting Notes

2017: This vintage of Abraxas is one of the more generous in recent memory. It produced a wine that is complex, clean, refreshing and shows the best of California sunshine balanced by the cooling San Pablo Bay breeze that influences RSV's organically farmed Scintilla Sonoma Vineyard in the Carneros region. Chamomile, buttercup, honeysuckle and soft herbs lead a floral bouquet that evolves into a rush of fruit like kumquat, lime, green apple, and honeydew melon. The first sip bursts with juicy flavors of tropical fruit like passionfruit and white pineapple, fresh summer peach, green apple and a twist of Meyer lemon. Orange blossom, lemon balm and a soft honey'd note chase a line of minerality that drives long length and carries the wine's complexity.

2018: This 2018 shows brilliant, integrated complexity led by a floral bouquet of jasmine, honeysuckle and spring citrus blossom, followed by fruit flavors of green apple, D'anjou pear, fresh Meyer lemon and tangerine. Focused, riesling-driven minerality is one of the many layers of texture that offer a nod of respect to the great aromatic whites of France, Germany and Austria. It is a deliciously dry wine that is great with the classics - cheese, cassoulet, tarte flambée - but really shines with the foods of the world - Mexican, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Indian - in that it can handle spices and flavors that are usually in beer or saké territory... and it does it with a verve that is rare for a New World wine.

DELICIOUS DUMPLINGS!

Dumplings are the paupers of the food world. Most recipes utilize scavenged bits of leftovers and stuff them into a hearty cloak of milled grains or starchy tubers. They are the perfect food made with ingredients that can be stretched to feed a crowd. Once the dumplings have been filled, shaped and rolled; they can then be boiled, fried or baked into warm steaming bites of delicious satisfaction. Varenyky are one of my favorite dumpling renditions and true to the Ukrainian roots of the Sinskey name.

I can only imagine the recipe below was one Rob's great-grandmother might have prepared. The sweet caramelized onions and smoky bacon play beautifully with the crisp acidity, stone fruit and citrus notes found in RSV's beautifully aromatic Abraxas; a deliciously vibrant wine that plays well with the glistening butter and touch of smoke captured in these intriguing dumplings.

Until the Next Wine.... *Maria*

POTATO, CARAMELIZED ONION AND SMOKED HAM VARENYKY

Yield: 30 Varenyky

1 recipe Varenyky Filling
1 recipe Varenyky Dough
6 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons chopped chives
½ cup sour cream

1. On a well-floured counter roll out dough fairly thin but still opaque.
2. Use a 3-inch circle cutter to cut out 30 rounds.
3. Place 1 heaping tablespoon of cooled filling at the center of the dough circles. Fold the dough over one side to form a half moon and pinch the edges to tightly seal. Dampen with a tiny bit of cold water if the dough is too dry to seal.
4. Crimp the edges of the Varenyky like for an apple pie or use a fork. The dumplings will open if the edges are not properly sealed. Place on a paper-lined sheet pan. At this point, the Varenyky can be frozen on the sheet tray for later finishing. Once frozen, gather and place in zip lock bags. Cook from frozen.
5. Heat large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the 2 tablespoons of butter. Allow the butter to melt and bubble then turn off the heat.
6. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a gentle boil - do not allow the water to boil too rapidly or the dumplings will fall apart. Add 8 to 12 Varenyky to the water at a time and cook until they all float to the top, about 5 minutes.
7. Remove the cooked Varenyky with a slotted spoon and place in the buttered pan. When all of the Varenyky have been added to the pan, add ½ cup of the cooking water and bring the pan to a boil. Toss to coat the Varenyky with butter.
8. When the liquid has reduced enough to make a light creamy coating on the Varenyky, add the chives and toss a final time. Repeat with the remaining Varenyky. Transfer to a serving dish and serve immediately with sour cream on the side.

VARENYKY FILLING

For a variation, 1 cup of cheese (gruyere, sharp cheddar or cook's choice) can be added to the filling. Ham can be omitted for a vegetarian option. Yield: Approximately 30 Varenyky

1 ¼ pound large Yukon gold or russet potatoes
Kosher salt
1 fresh or dried bay leaf
4 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 small onion, finely diced
Freshly ground black pepper
5 ounces applewood smoked ham, finely diced

1. Peel the potatoes and cut into 2-inch pieces.
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add a small handful of salt then the potatoes and bay leaf. Return to a boil and then reduce to a simmer and cook until potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes. The potatoes should slide easily off the end of a knife when poked.
3. Drain the potatoes in a colander over a sink and let them sit until they are dry but still hot. Discard the bay leaf.
4. Turn the potatoes out into a bowl and mash finely with a large fork. A few lumps are ok. Cover with a towel to keep warm and reserve.
5. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Add the butter. When the butter bubbles and starts to brown add the onions and cook until the onions are soft. Reduce the heat to medium low and continue to cook until the onions are golden, about 15 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent the onions from sticking and burning. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Add the ham and cook until you can smell its smokiness. Add the onion and ham mixture to the reserved potatoes and mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Let the mixture cool to room temperature.
7. When cool, the potato filling can be used to make the Varenyky immediately or refrigerated until ready to use in a day or two.

VARENYKY DOUGH

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup milk

4 tablespoons unsalted butter (½ stick)
1 large egg

1. Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl and make a hollow at the center.
2. Warm the milk and butter together in a small pan over low heat just enough to melt the butter. Do not overheat or boil. Cool.
3. Whisk the egg into the cooled milk mixture.
4. Add the egg/milk mixture to the hollow center of the flour and slowly mix in the flour by swirling the liquid and allowing it to grab the flour gradually. Continue until all the of flour is mixed in.
5. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured counter and knead by hand until the dough is smooth and elastic but still soft. Shape it into a log and divide into 3 pieces. Wrap each piece with plastic. Let the dough sit at room temperature for 20 minutes or overnight in the refrigerator to relax.





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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