



ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS

PINOT GRIS, LOS CARNEROS 2023





THE RUSTY GRAPE...

by Rob Sinskey

& Rusty the Steer!

The lumbering bovine was not afraid... and why should he be? After all, he outweighs me by nearly 2,000 pounds. Yet he approached with a gentleness I would expect of a canine companion, huge nostrils sniffing as he looked me in the eye. I extended my hand to give him a pat when his tongue jutted out, licking with a velcro-like texture that almost sucked my hand into his mouth. The big creature then presented his side as if I would know to give him a rub down.

Rusty has lived almost his entire life on the Wilding Farm. Some fifteen years ago, he was brought there as a calf in a program to teach people with Down syndrome to work with animals and learn how to farm. The old Vine Village, as it was called before we acquired it, was a magical place where the residents could bottle-feed a calf, work with the goats, pick apples, make vinegar, and create art and music. The family before us ran it for fifty years with love and care before the pandemic and their age forced them to close and put the property on the market.

We agreed to keep and care for the animals and let them live out their lives on the farm. But it was no burden, as it allowed us to expand upon our goal of creating a biodiverse environment where the vineyards, though important, are just one part of a vital and healthy ecosystem.

Pinot Gris has nothing to do with Rusty the Steer except that Pinot Gris is a “rust” colored grape, and we feel that biodiversity makes better wine and is healthier for the planet. Animals can graze the vineyards, clear overgrown land, and add nutrients to the soil with their waste. They also keep farming interesting. Having the animals on the farm allows a break from routine to work with them, plan where their presence will be most beneficial, and just know they are living their best lives. After all, happy bovines and happy people make better wine.



Winegrowing Notes

Water, water everywhere! The winter of 2023 was a wet one, filling reservoirs and saturating soils. When the skies cleared, the vintage started slowly as the weather stayed cool to moderate... ideal for vibrant aromatic grapes like Pinot Gris. The gorgeous rust-colored Pinot Gris grapes were night-harvested off RSVnapa's organically farmed Carneros vineyards to preserve freshness and brought into the cellar for the last vintage at the old winery.

Tasting Notes

This ethereal Pinot Gris from RSVnapa's organically farmed Los Carneros vineyards leads with delicate and alluring aromatics - a wine with an Old World soul that enjoys the California sun. Floral notes of jasmine and chamomile meet apricot, green apple, and Asian pear. The lush flavors are balanced by a firm backbone of minerality that lends a vibrant freshness that tells the tale of a vintage marked by a long, cool growing season. Like all RSVnapa wines, this Pinot Gris shines at the dinner table and is great with various cuisines from different cultures. It is phenomenal now and will last for many years to come. (08/2024)
200 cases produced.

A NOT-SO-SIMPLE LIFE!

I remember watching *Green Acres* on TV when I was very young, which makes me well on my way to being very old. The absurdity of taking a thoroughly citified woman and plunking her down on a farm to start a new life with her husband was a stretch. Though it seemed comically silly back then, I kind of get it now.

The experience of growing up in the suburbs induced a deep sense of ennui in my young soul. I knew there was more to the world than the haven of mowed lawns and swimming pools. I was ready to find out when off I went to France in my senior year of High School. Touching down in Paris for a few weeks was life-changing. My mind was blown. After that, I moved to the smaller city of Nantes, where I roamed freely with my new French friends. Midnight scooter rides, carousing in bars, and smoking the occasional hand-rolled cigarette (just to be cool) created a deep-seated thrill. I was hooked on city life. Once I returned stateside, I hightailed it as fast as I could to a city, first New York, then Boston and San Francisco. I never looked back to suburbia or, worse, the COUNTRYSIDE.

Boom. I married Rob and was suddenly shifted from the city (San Francisco) to the country (Napa). I was charmed by the openness of the land, the climate, the greenness, the vineyards, and the close ties to the rhythms of nature. Thoughts of *Green Acres* came flooding back to me when I realized I was out of my league in the farming department. I'd had a garden in my youth and loved it, but the scale of the gardens at the winery and the one I created on our Capa Vineyard scared the hell out of me. I adapted and ran with it with varied success. There were many unexpected triumphs but also many fruitless plants and dead shoots until I got my bearings. True success came when I began working with nature instead of against it. I realized that many plants could survive with less water if you allowed them to adapt. I learned that fertilizer wasn't necessary if you studied leaves, fruit set, and growth patterns, and a good compost not only delivered nutrients but also built up the soil and provided texture and air to the roots of the plants. My drop into farming was a heady experience.

Then came Wilding Farm, and my brain exploded once again. I thought life would slow down a bit and become more simplified as we moved to concentrate our food farming in one place. Becoming a caretaker to hundreds of olive trees, an heirloom fruit orchard, and several garden vegetable patches was almost too much. I wasn't doing it alone, of course. We had a small team of 3 – Patty, Juan, and Antonio, with Kari, our fearless Vineyard Farm manager, and our small but mighty vineyard crew to shoulder some of the heavy lifting.

Taking the farm from neglected sparseness to exploding with deliciousness in just a couple of seasons now has me strategizing how to distribute and process 400 pounds of plums, 800 pounds of apples, and just as many pears. Kari takes the olives to press, but mighty Patty, with Antonio's help, handles the garden and the hundreds of pounds of beans, cucumbers, squash, beets, tomatoes, potatoes, and herbs. It's a head-spinning time that keeps our wheels turning year-round.

Life hasn't become simpler since we moved to the farm. There are nights when I fall into bed sore and exhausted from digging holes, pruning, weeding, planting, tying, and harvesting fruits and vegetables. Would I change things? Not one bit, but we sure could use a few more hands.

Until the next wine...

Maria

SALAD DAYS

Because I've been so busy, life in the kitchen has become much simpler and deliciously successful. The two salads below marry effortlessly with the brightness and elegance of our Pinot Gris and take minutes to throw together. Their simplicity is welcome when you're worn out from a day in the garden. If you can't find Moscatel Vinegar, a high-acid white wine vinegar with a pinch of sugar may be substituted.

RIPE PEACH, MOZZARELLA, PINE NUT AND TARRAGON SALAD

This salad is made easier using freestone peaches, where the pit comes away easier from the flesh of the peach. Serves 2

2 medium peaches, fully ripened	Extra virgin olive oil
4 ounces fresh mozzarella	Moscatel white vinegar
1 tablespoon lightly toasted pine nuts	Flaked sea salt
6 medium-sized, fresh tarragon leaves	Freshly ground black pepper

1. Pit and slice the peaches into wedges and then cut wedges in half at varied angles. Arrange on a serving platter.
2. Cut the mozzarella into similar-sized pieces and tuck them around the peaches. Sprinkle the pine nuts over the top.
3. Tear the tarragon leaves and scatter them over the peaches and cheese.
4. Drizzle olive oil over the top of everything and then sprinkle vinegar over.
5. Sprinkle with flaked sea salt and then grind pepper over.

PEAR, CHICORY, GOAT CHEESE, AND PINE NUT SALAD

Pear varieties come into season at different times. Pears are picked when their seeds turn black, but the flesh is still hard. To ripen the pears, buy them 3-4 days in advance and let them sit on the counter until they soften to a firm juiciness. Serves 2-4

1 small head Castelfranco or radicchio chicory, torn into bite-sized pieces	8 fresh parsley leaves
2 heads Belgian endive, trimmed and into 1-inch pieces	Extra virgin olive oil
1 medium ripe pear, cut in half and cored	Moscatel white vinegar
4 ounces fresh or lightly aged goat cheese	Flaked sea salt
1 to 2 tablespoons pine nuts or walnuts, lightly toasted	Freshly ground black pepper

1. Arrange the chicories and endive on a medium serving platter.
2. Slice the pear into thin wedges. Arrange and tuck into the chicories.
3. Break or crumble the goat cheese over the top and sprinkle the top of the salad with nuts and parsley leaves.
4. Drizzle olive oil over the top of everything and then sprinkle vinegar over.
5. Sprinkle with flaked sea salt and then grind pepper over.





FINE WINES. ORGANIC VINES.

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