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Smartly made Napa cabernet has pedigree and pleasing price

Published: Thursday, September 30, 2010, 10:22 AM Updated: Thursday, September 30, 2010, 10:38 AM

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One of the most appropriately named wines is the **2007 Raymond Vineyards Family Classic Cabernet Sauvignon**.

In 1970, Roy Raymond founded his winery with a 90-acre purchase in Napa's Rutherford appellation. Raymond arrived in Napa Valley in 1933 and was hired at Beringer Brothers Winery; three years later, he married Martha Beringer, whose grandfather started Beringer winery in 1876. The Raymonds continued working there until it was sold in 1971.

and Walter, who were wearing work clothes, their hands stained blue from the pigments of the crushed grapes. It was the surest statement of a family-run winery.

In the ensuing decades, Napa Valley changed from family-owned farms and vineyards to trophy wineries designed to make architectural statements for the fabulously wealthy. And the new owners, without any winemaking pedigree, priced the wines for their ego rather than the market. Through it all, the Raymonds continued to make authentic, reasonably priced wines that were rooted in an understanding of the soil and vines that they worked.

The 2007 Raymond Vineyards Family Classic Cabernet Sauvignon is made from 83 percent cabernet sauvignon, 13 percent merlot, 3 percent cabernet franc, and 1 percent petite syrah. The Raymonds used their generational knowledge and sources to bring 70 percent of the grapes from their Napa estate or contracted Napa vineyards, and the balance from vineyards in Sonoma and Lake counties.

This intelligent use of different vineyard areas and grapes gives the wine a delightful complexity. The oak barrel aging limited to 79 percent, of which only 16 percent were new, showing the wisdom gained from decades of winemaking.

The bright garnet color and appealing scents of Earl Grey tea and black cherry raise the level of anticipation for the first sip of this family-made wine. It rewards you with a savory red plum fruit flavor supported by soft tannins that glide the wine across your palate, uninterrupted by its

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Raymond Vineyards first vintage was in 1974, a legendary year for Napa wines. A few years later, I visited Raymond Vineyards and vividly remember meeting the two sons, Roy

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alcohol. The 2007 Raymond Vineyards Family Classic Cabernet Sauvignon is instantly likeable and ready for the table.

In 2009, the Raymonds sold their winery to the French Boisset family. Jean-Charles Boisset owns wineries in Burgundy, Beaujolais, the Rhone Valley, and Southern France along with Canada and California's Russian River Valley.

Boisset has taken a good first step with the hiring of Eric Pooler to be the new vineyard manager. He is implementing organic and biodynamic farming methods for Raymond's eventual certification as an organic winery.

Hopefully, the Boisset family will retain Raymond's history of reasonable prices and classic winemaking. Napa sends consumers more than enough overpriced, oaky and high alcohol wines made by corporate directives.

Fedway Associates in Kearny distributes the 2007 Raymond Vineyards Family Classic Cabernet Sauvignon; it retails for approximately \$19.

A Glass of Wine appears every week in Savor/Today. John Foy may be reached at savor@starledger.com; or at his website, www.thewineodyssey.com

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