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Up and Down the Wine Roads by George Starke

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A delicious potpourri of mid-October items

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George Starke | Posted: Thursday, October 13, 2011 8:30 pm | (0) Comments

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Raymond Vineyards held an open house to showcase its completed renovation of the historic property the Boisset Family Estates acquired in 2009. The family also owns Buena Vista, De Loach and Lyeth wineries in Sonoma County, and has extensive holdings in France.

The recent renovation of the grounds and winery offers visitors a special Napa Valley experience: a mini education in the fundamentals of biodynamic viticulture in a one-and-half-acre of outdoor exhibits in its “Theater of Nature”, and winemaking and wine appreciation in 11 rooms in the winery, one of which, the Red Room, contains a sensuous, red velvet décor that might have been inspired by Sally Stanford’s “Valhalla” in Sausalito (old timers will remember her). The new Raymond Winery should be a strong tourist draw.

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Last Monday, Schramsberg hosted an evening of memorable foods (prepared by Restaurant Terra’s Hiro Sone and Lissa Doumani and the staff) and beautiful Schramsberg wines in a magical setting in their wine aging caves to thank its accounts in the valley.

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Start transferring your pocket change to your piggy bank so you’ll be ready for Meadowood’s annual signature event, “The Twelve Days of Christmas” which benefits Share our Strength. From Dec. 2 to 17, Meadowood Resort will host 12 holiday feasts. Each feast will be prepared by a celebrity chef from across the U.S., Mexico and Japan. These will be accompanied by Napa Valley wines, presented by their vintners who will join the festivities. For information visit meadwood.com

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Muscat Mania

Although the variety has been around for a long time, it has always been on the back burner in terms of production in Napa Valley. Suddenly and mysteriously, consumers are clamoring for muscat (moscato) and muscat-based wines. There has always been a huge market for slightly sweet wines as proven by the phenomenal popularity of white zinfandel. Moscato may be the white zinfandel of the future. Some bars are offering a drink of moscato and vodka. Sutter Home suggests that rather than pairing their Moscato, with its rich, creamy flavor, with desserts, it can replace them. Reportedly, the winery has





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imported several thousands of gallons of muscat from Argentina to meet its Muscato demand, and its tasting room employees are suffering from “moscato-pourers’ elbow.”

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On Tuesday, Oct. 18, the Culinary Institute of America will host its seventh annual Wine Advocate Seminar, with an optional dinner to follow at Press restaurant in St. Helena. Proceeds go to the Wine Advocate Scholarship Fund, which supports the Rudd Center for Professional Wine Studies at the CIA. This year, Robert Parker, who created the program and has presided over it since its inception seven years ago, is handing the reins over to colleague Antonio Galloni. The 2011 seminar will focus on “12 extraordinary Barolos” from the Piedmont area of Italy. For more information and tickets, call Reuben Katz at 967-2305.

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Todd White, Napa Valley’s creator of the enormously successful Cheers of St Helena and Cheers to Taste (which hosts events for the hospitality industry in the valley) and which in three short years has attracted more than 40,000 wine and food sniffers, swirlers and sippers held its last events of the season. On Wednesday of last week, more than 1,600 people filled the lobby of Lincoln Theater in Yountville to sip the liquid joys of more than 30 wineries and to sample the creations of 15 valley restaurateurs. Adding to the festivities were the Ta Vaka Dancers, a group of Polynesian drummers and dancers, in the theater lobby and 12 members of the string section of the Napa Valley Symphony presented some music-to-sip-by in the theater. Then on Friday evening (October 6), Cheers St. Helena held its last wine, food and music event for 2011.

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Aren’t you glad that you mortgaged your home to buy Constellation Brands stock? Friday’s San Francisco Chronicle reported that Constellation Brands fiscal second quarter profits were up 75 percent after four years of cost-cutting. In California, the company owns the Robert Mondavi Winery in Napa Valley and Ravenswood and Clos du Bois wineries in Sonoma Valley.

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The Wall Street Journal reports that the Robert Mondavi 56-acre estate on Wappo Hill, which includes two tennis courts, an 11,500 square foottwo-bedroom home (with a 50-foot swimming pool in the living room), an underground wine cellar and a guest house, will be offered for auction on Nov. 15 by sealed bid. The auction will be handled by Sheldon Good and Company, a New York based real estate auction firm. The minimum bid will be $13.9 million.

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Beverage recommendation while watching the presidential candidates’ debates … Pepto Bismol.

George Starke may be reached at wineroads.com or by phone at 942-0733.

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Posted in George-starke on *Thursday, October 13, 2011 8:30 pm* *Updated: 5:32 pm.*

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