

Buena Vista Winery moves into the future preserving its past

DRINKS | SEPTEMBER 15, 2012 | BY: JULIE SANTIAGO | [Subscribe](#)



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August 31, 2012 was a special day for Sonoma wine country. Its most historical landmark, [Buena Vista Winery](#), welcomed visitors to show up the beautiful restoration of two of their historical buildings: The Press House and the Champagne Cellar. The [restoration](#) is bringing back the splendor of a winery that has been an essential part of the California wine history. Buena Vista Winery is listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) and is a California Historical Landmark.

History and Legacy of Buena Vista Winery:

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Agoston Haraszthy founded Buena Vista Winery in 1857. The winery has a rich

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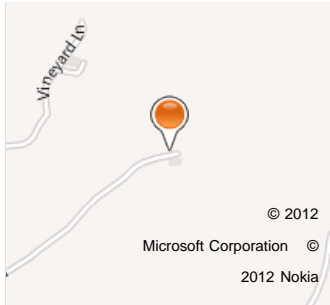
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heritage as the first premium and certainly the most colorful of all of the wineries in California and its founder, the self-proclaimed "Count of Buena Vista," [Agoston Haraszthy](#), was a vivacious and eccentric pioneer with a veritable love and unending commitment to California wine.



Buena Vista winery
Photo credit: Edgar Solis



Location: Buena Vista Cameros Winery

Surrounded by his own tales of intrigue and political exile, The Count migrated from Europe in 1840 in pursuit of opportunity and freedom in the burgeoning American West. Following the forty-niners in search of gold in the hills of Northern California, Haraszthy sought "purple gold" the perfect 'terroir' for exception wine. He ultimately settled in Sonoma where he founded Buena Vista Winery in 1857. A committed farmer, an experimental innovator and vintner, a respected author, a shrewd businessman and a brilliant and incredibly zealous promoter, The Count is considered California's most acclaimed and flamboyant vinicultural pioneer and evangelist. Among his contributions to California winemaking were the first gravity-flow winery; the first excavated wine caves and the use of redwood barrels for aging and fermentation. The Count planted what may have been the state's first European vines and within a year was growing 100 grape varieties. Although it's a matter of academic debate, he may have planted California's first zinfandel vines.

Despite his abrupt death in 1869 in an alligator infested river in the jungles of Nicaragua and following the challenges of the depression, prohibition, and phyloxera infestation his beloved Buena Vista Winery has not only endured but also prospered. ([Ref. History of California Wine](#))

Buena Vista's future:

[Boisset Family Estates](#), a family with a true love and respect for Buena Vista, is passionately committed to continue the imaginative vision and unrivaled legacy first created by the The Count 150 years ago. In April 2011, Boisset Family Estates and its president, [Jean-Charles Boisset](#), purchased the Buena Vista brand and the old stone winery.

Jean-Charles Boisset expressed (at the August 31, 2012 event) that he intends to manage Buena Vista respecting and preserving its past history and is very excited to take the winery into the future. Under his wing the winery is seeing a most needed fresh start over. His plans call for the winery to be a place for visitors to experience California wine history and heritage. The historic Champagne Cellar has being brought back to life employing the most advance techniques to retrofit the building to preserve its structural integrity. The Old Press House, also renovated, is now the new winery Tasting Room downstairs and a museum relating the winery's story in the second floor.

Just months after the purchase by Boisset, Buena Vista started a transformation bringing the winery to its original looks. From the dangers posed by the retrofit to the laying of the final cobblestone, it has been a daunting task but worth the effort. The work is not complete yet. The opening and ribbon cutting ceremony took place on August 31, 2012 to commemorate the 200th birthday of Count Agoston Haraszthy. The winery's transformation is expected to be complete by August 2013.

At the event guests were received with a dry Pinot Noir Rose and escorted by Count Haraszthy (as represented by actor George Webber), then welcomed to the grounds by Jean-Charles Boisset while guests sipped to a beautiful glass of Buena Vista 2011 French Colombard. Grapes for this wine came from a vineyard in the Russian River Valley, planted before Prohibition. This is a refreshing and crisp wine with citrus aromas, well balanced and elegant.

Buena Vista is known for their Sparkling wines, after all the winery was the first winery in California to produced the first Methode Champenoise sparkling wine and hand dug wine caves, that until recently were closed to the public for safety concerns. So, there was no surprise guests were also treated to a glass of their Buena Vista Brut Sparkling while entering to the renovated

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Champagne Cellar. The building has gone extensive retrofitting using an innovative technique called Center Core Drilling, that allows for strengthening of masonry walls with no visible evidence. A unique mortar was mixed to ensure its compatibility with the soft characteristics of the original stone as well as matching the original historic mortar.

For Jean-Charles Boisset is a dream come true, since as a child visited the winery during a visit to the U.S. with his grandparents. He remembers visiting the winery and falling in love with it. As a child, he and his sister, could not try he wines at the winery, but his grandparents were impressed with the wines they tasted, that they bought the wines, came to the hotel room and allow their grandkids to have the same tasting they experienced. He grew up in Burgundy among the historic vineyards of the Côte de Nuits, where he was immersed from the very beginning in a family deeply involved in the world of wine, his parents having started the family wine business in 1961. Jean-Charles' involvement began early, accompanying his grandfather to the vineyards, playing in the barrel rooms and, as a teen, working several summers in the winery & cellars.

He was impressed with Buena Vista wines as his grandparents and remembers telling his sister how great it would be to make wines in California. Who would it said he would be following Count Agoston Haraszthy steps.

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