



SEARCH

LOGIN Email:
CREATE LOGIN

Password:
Forgot Password?

Remember Me

News Headlines ▾ Wine Industry Metrics ▾ Calendar Digital Edition ▾ Subscribe Directory/Buyer's Guide ▾ Advertise Online Marketing System

ADVERTISEMENT

Have You Been Selected?

08.09.2012



The Count of Buena Vista's Biggest Fan

Boisset seeks to restore Sonoma winery to its onetime glory

by Paul Franson



Buena Vista undergoes renovations in preparation for its grand opening tonight.

Source: Mike Anderson ©2012

Sonoma, Calif.—Buena Vista, arguably California's first premium winery, is about to be reborn under the care of an unlikely savior: a Frenchman in love with California's long wine history.

[Buena Vista Winery](#) was founded in 1857 in Sonoma by mysterious Hungarian Agoston Haraszthy, the self-proclaimed "Count of Buena Vista" on a site where a Christianized Native American had planted vinifera vines.

Though once one of Northern California wine country's biggest draws, Buena Vista has languished of late, having five owners just between 2004 and last year, when [Boisset Wine Estates](#) bought the historic property just northeast of the town of Sonoma.

Jean-Charles Boisset, who also has reinvigorated newer [DeLoach](#) and [Raymond Vineyards](#), regards Buena Vista as a linchpin of his California holdings. It was the first California winery he visited (at age 11), and he never forgot it as his father and he gathered an empire of wine in his native France.

Boisset acquired the property from Ascentia, the troubled wine company that recently finally expired, on May 1, 2011. He immediately set about revamping the wine offerings and is now completing renovation of the old Champagne Cellar, where he intends to make wine this harvest. The last time wine was made on the property was in the 1970s.

One step in restoring the winery's reputation is to bring back fabled but abandoned Buena Vista wines, notably Zinfandel and cream sherry.

He also has reintroduced sparkling wine, though bought from another producer; the Champagne Cellar will be used to produce Zinfandel and Syrah from nearby vineyards that were once part of the 500-acre Buena Vista property.

Wine Industry Metrics

Off-Premise Sales »	Month	12 Months
June 2011	\$342 million	\$4,507 million
June 2012	\$367 million	\$4,836 million
		7%

Direct-to-Consumer Shipments »	Month	12 Months
June 2011	\$63 million	\$1,226 million
June 2012	\$67 million	\$1,353 million
		6%

Winery Job Index »	Month	12 Months
June 2011	185	127
June 2012	196	152
		11%

MORE »

as of: 07/16/12

READER COMMENTS

Article: [Experimenting With Vine Stress](#) »

Yanosh is exaggerating a bit. It is not common in South America, and I manage...

Reader: Adam White

Article: [B.C. Grapegrowers Urged to Embrace Data](#) »

I love to hear that GPS, GIS, and geomatics (surveying) is being brought up to...

Reader: mywinepal

Article: [Experimenting With Vine Stress](#) »

I agree with Jim. Phylloxera is found nearly everywhere. Unless you are in some isolated...

Reader: Yanosh

Article: [Experimenting With Vine Stress](#) »

Wow, positive attitude. I work with a 16 year old block of suitcase Syrah on...

Reader: Durn

Article: [Experimenting With Vine Stress](#) »

Phylloxera was spread from North America to Europe, and South Africa, and South America and...

Reader: Jim W

Directory/Buyer's Guide — Your Wine Industry Marketplace

WINERY SUPPLIER

SUPPLIER SEARCH

by Product

by Company Name or Brand

[Browse by Category »](#)

2012 Directory/Buyer's Guide



VIEW VIDEO ▶ TO LEARN MORE

EXPANDED ONLINE SEARCH INCLUDED WITH PURCHASE

[ORDER NOW »](#)

[LEARN MORE »](#)

Wines & Vines Magazine



[LEARN MORE »](#)

[SUBSCRIBE »](#)

HEADLINES

- Oregon Wine Institute Mulls Future
- The Storied Past of Pennsylvania Wine
- Wine Business School Releases First Wine
- Organic Wine and Grape Certifiers to Merge

[MORE »](#)

FEATURES

Digital Edition Now Available!

ADVERTISEMENT



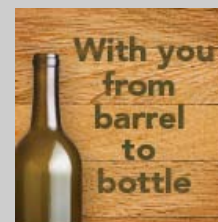
21st Annual Wine Industry Financial Symposium

Sept. 24-25, 2012
Napa Valley Marriott
Register now at www.winesymposium.com

GrapeParts4Less.com

Quality American Made Grape Harvester Parts
**PICKING RODS
CLOSURES
CONVEYOR PARTS
AND MORE!**

GrapeParts4Less.com



TRICORBRAUN winepak

The winery also will reintroduce a range of Sonoma wines following tradition: Recent former owners focused on Carneros AVA wines, making them at modern facilities southeast of the town of Sonoma in the Carneros AVA on a property that Boisset didn't acquire.

Buena Vista also will continue to offer Carneros wines and private reserve wines, and it has introduced The Count, a soft blended red that appeals to many new wine drinkers.

Buena Vista has resurrected its private reserve label for its finest wines and also will sell small lots of unusual or traditional-in-California wines like French Colombard, and possibly Green Hungarian under the Buena Vista Vinicultural Society name in homage to California's first co-operative wine venture.

Most of the wines are made at custom facilities including the old Buena Vista production facility in Carneros.

A history of characters

"Count" Haraszthy famously imported 353 wine varieties from Europe during the American Civil War, then California reneged on its promise to pay him; he was fired by the Buena Vista Vinicultural Society that he had formed to create Buena Vista and left for Central America, where he disappeared in 1869. One account says he was eaten by a crocodile.

Boisset, who has a flair for the theatrical, is playing the connection with the Hungarian visionary and his Hungarian roots to the hilt. He hired local historic impersonator and actor George Webber, who has portrayed Gen. Vallejo, founder of Sonoma, Mark Twain and others, to serve as "The Count."

Webber has been hamming it up in meetings with distributors and resellers around the country, and he will greet visitors once the renovation of the winery is complete. In fact, starting Saturday he will appear in "The Count of Buena Vista," a free historical performance at the winery each Saturday.

It turns out that Aug. 30 is the real count's 200th birthday, and naturally, the winery will celebrate. In addition to holding a grand opening of the renovated Champagne Cellar, Boisset has invited Hungarian officials to visit. He even cooked up a sister city agreement between Sonoma and Tokaj, Hungary, and will sell 50 cases of rich six-puttonyo Tokaji under the Buena Vista label.

At the winery site, extensive renovations are frantically under way amid plans to also host a presentation of "A Midsummer's Night Dream" starting tonight as well as the grand opening.

Physical changes

The most significant work is in the 1864 Champagne Cellar. A new and expensive method was used to reinforce the walls against earthquakes. Instead of visible steel beams and bolts, the roof was removed and 60 6-inch holes were bored in the thick stone walls every 4 feet around the perimeter of the building. These were then filled with steel reinforcing and epoxy so the building shows no sign of the work.

In addition, masons removed 4 inches of mortar between the large stones on the exterior and repointed it with matching mortar.

Inside, Boisset is creating a private club room for the Buena Vista Vinicultural Society, as he created the Belle Epoch Red Room at Raymond Vineyards.

The shallow caves have been reinforced and will be used for visitor activities, too.

- Cover Story
Get the Max From Your Capsules
 - Growing & Winemaking
Rootstock Myths Busted
 - Wine Industry Data
Center
Carneros AVA Discounted the Most
 - Closures
Closures War at a Standstill?
 - *Wine East* Features
Rootstocks and Pest Management
- [MORE »](#)

CALENDAR

- **August 11**
Monterey Winemakers Celebration
 - **August 11-12**
Finger Lakes Riesling Festival
 - **August 11-13**
TEXSOM
 - **August 14**
Fresno State Grape Day
- [MORE »](#)



Wine Review Weekly

A compilation of wines reviewed each week by leading wine service and major daily newspaper wine columnists

[READ »](#)



Read it, Search it, Share it, Download it!

[LEARN MORE »](#)

[ORDER NOW »](#)

ONLINE MARKETING SYSTEM

Powered By WinesVinesData



Target the right wineries for your marketing needs

The Industry Standard winery marketing application

[FREE LIVE DEMO »](#)

[VIEW VIDEO »](#)

WineJobs.com

[SEARCH JOBS](#)

Latest Job Listings

- [Preventative Maintenance](#)
Hopland, CA
Winemaking and Production
- [Wine Club Mgr. & Social](#)
Healdsburg, CA
DTC, Tasting Room and Retail
- [General Cellar, Harvest](#)
Windsor, CA
Winemaking and Production
- [Sales Representative](#)
Multiple, Or, Wa, So Cal, East Coast, NA
Sales and Marketing
- [Viticulturist](#)
Greenfield, CA
Vineyards
- [Sales - Greater San Francisco](#)
San Francisco, CA
Sales and Marketing
- [Harvest Intern](#)
Sebastopol, CA
Winemaking and Production
- [Harvest Cellar Worker](#)
Geyserville, CA
Winemaking and Production
- [Tasting Room Sales Ass.](#)
Los Gatos, CA
DTC, Tasting Room and Retail
- [Warehouse/Delivery](#)

www.amcor.com

STELVIN

info.capsules@amcor.com

WINERY SERVICES

Wine | Bottling | Packaging

Click or call
1.800.321.8747

Also under way are a planned demonstration vineyard, a garden of food crops that originated in the area, stone paving, picnic accommodations, a new gate and improvements in the rustic parking areas.

Boisset has commissioned a history of Buena Vista and Sonoma by noted wine historian Charles Sullivan to appear in January. He's also serving Buena Vista at Julia Child's 100th birthday party in the Smithsonian on Aug. 16, and is working with the American Ambassador to France to serve Buena Vista wines in the embassy in Paris.

"People need to learn that America has a long and respected wine history. It didn't start in the 1960s," Boisset says passionately.

The Burgundian has seemingly inherited Rob Mondavi's mantle of educating the world about California's wine history and its wines. He and his wife, Gina Gallo, who have young twin girls, even bought Robert and Margrit Mondavi's old house on Wappo Hill in Yountville.

Charles Krug renovation under way

In related news, the Peter Mondavi family held a groundbreaking Aug. 7 for the renovation of its 1872 Redwood Cellar into a showcase visitor center even including Napa County's second deli at a winery.

These plans were disclosed in *Wines & Vines*. (See "[Charles Krug Winery to Add Attractions.](#)")

[SHARE >>](#)

[PRINTER-FRIENDLY VERSION >>](#)

[E-MAIL THIS ARTICLE >>](#)

[POST A COMMENT >>](#)

Currently no comments posted for this article.

[SUBSCRIBE TO WINES & VINES PRINT EDITION >>](#)

[CONTACT OUR EDITORIAL STAFF >>](#)

[CURRENT NEWS INDEX >>](#)

WINES & VINES

866.453.9701 | 415.453.9700 | Fax: 415.453.2517
65 Mitchell Blvd., Ste. A San Rafael, CA 94903
info@winesandvines.com

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Editors](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Print Edition](#) | [Digital Edition](#)
[Industry Links](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Copyright © 2001-2012 by Wine Communications Group, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
No material may be reproduced without written permission of the Publisher.
Wines&Vines does not assume any responsibility for any unsolicited manuscripts or materials.

Portland, OR
General Administration and

[More Job Listings >>](#)

Follow Us On:



Subscribe Now!

Magazine subscribers get full online access to the current edition and all back issues!



SEARCH