

Wine Blog

"Juicy Tales by Jo Diaz"



AVA, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Napa, Rutherford, Wine, Winemaker, Winery

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Rutherford Dust with Theatre of the Mind, a 90 degree sojourn on a 100 degree day



We arrive in Napa Valley and it's over 100 degrees in the shade...

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I wonder, "What is this going to be like... I could so easily have stayed in the office (because of the heat). But, I messed up the year before with my promise to be there, and it wasn't going to happen again, for most any reason.

I was greatly appreciating the reprieve.

I was also thinking that it was solely a media event. But, that wasn't it at all.

As I became confused that it might be a consumer event, given all the people headed toward the shuttle buses, I thought, "Horrors, I think I

might have signed us into a consumer event?" as it began to evolve... (Yeah, I can be that shamefully bad.)

Theater of Nature welcomed us and I was immediately taken by it. Now I wish (so I have to go back) that I had taken images of Jose in the frames that are part of the outdoor theatre. It's whimsical, and artful, and cunning all at the same time. (Get your cameras and go have some fun, guys! If it wasn't 100+ in the shade, and if I didn't have somewhere to be, this would have enticed me to play.)

So, back to Napa, 100+ degrees in the shade, and I surrender to the adventure, and off we went.

We entered **Raymond Vineyards'** renew, redo, and I was thinking, "What? This is so intriguing. Grounds that look like

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you've entered an Alice in Wonderland scene. Inside, lots of stainless steel, lots of black and red, and lots of contrasts. Is that a picture of Jean-Charles Boisset I see? I go down what hallway?

Before I even entered the tasting room, my eyes were developmentally challenged in a corridor. Am I seeing white layers of the same image straight ahead? ... *What is that?*

Then, I spied **Taylor Eason**. I didn't know that this is where she's now working. Somehow I had connected her to **DeLoach**, because she had asked a question about DeLoach on Facebook, and I still hadn't completely placed her to the right property.

"Wow, girl, I'm impressed; you're everywhere," I was thinking as she was saying the exact same thing to me. Quickly, she explained the Raymond story and that **Jean-Charles Boisset**, whom she arranged to have me meet weeks before at DeLoach, was also the owner of this property.

This day, I was focused on a *Rutherford story*, and a Raymond story just broke out. "What?" I was thinking....



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It's a winery that I came to to think of as, "All the World's a Stage, Raymond."

It's jaw dropping, when you enter. This is like a Boisset Museum, which of course in many respects it is. Very dark (and yet light), very rock hard (and yet very sensual). Embellishments that make you think a yin-yang Paris is hiding around the next corner somewhere.



And there he was again, welcoming all of his guests. Jean-Charles Boisset... Another piece of his puzzle. The Gallo-Boisset empire is beginning to look like the inside of the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, but with a very modern twist to me.

Have you ever been inside **Biltmore's Estate**? It's 175,000 square feet large, with 250 rooms... There are behind the wall passageways, which are hidden from the public. Servants used to travel through these hallways as they traveled to a room where a duty was to be performed. They even had

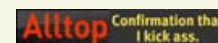


English: Biltmore House and reflections (Photo

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their own floor.

credit: Wikipedia)

What a story could be
constructed, if those walls could talk...

Rather than having this empire at a single location, it's global... Just a sign of the times, and a modern day twist of wine and history.

FROM THE RAYMOND WEB: Jean-Charles Boisset serves as president of Boisset Family Estates, one of the world's leading family-owned wine companies, with wineries in Burgundy, Beaujolais, the Rhone Valley, the South of France, and expertise in French sparkling wines. Boisset's August 2009 purchase of Raymond Vineyards expanded the company's footprint in the New World, which already included properties in Canada and California's Russian River Valley, making it one of the top twenty-five producers in the US.

With all the manners of the world upon him, Jean-Charles began introducing me to his friends, telling them about the story that I had just written about **DeLoach's metamorphosis**. Now, I was seeing another facet of his world, which is truly amazing. If you're in Napa, you owe it to yourself to check out Raymond, in the Rutherford district.

What I enjoyed, before I hit the dust running, was a world unto itself at Raymond on that Rutherford Dust day.



Stephanie Putnam, director of winemaking, oversees all aspects of Raymond's wine production, and was pouring her wine. She's also had winemaking experiences at **Far Niente** and **The Hess Collection**. She began as a cellar worker at Hess; rapidly progressing to winemaker, she also worked with the winery's South American partners.

I'm leaving you with his final image. It's warm and welcoming, the other half of cool and stark, and how Raymond is now defining itself, along with its sensitivity to an organic way of doing business.

You've got to see it to believe it.

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[Jo Diaz](#) on July 17th, 2012 03:00 am

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