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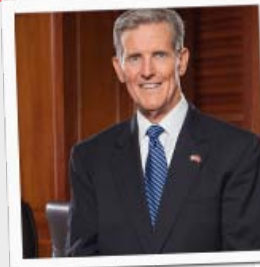
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SideDish is a food-related discussion among editors at *D Magazine* about the Dallas-Fort Worth dining scene -- everything from good meals to bad service, kitchen gossip to restaurant news, chefs' secrets to culinary trends. *Bon appetit*.

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What To Drink Now: Boisset, Melka and Graham

Posted on November 15th, 2013 2:56pm by [Hayley Hamilton](#)
Filed under [Wine & Spirits](#)

For a wine lover, which we in Texas are, Napa Valley offers some of the best wine from prime fruit in the world. Hearty Cabernet Sauvignon, refined to very lush to heavily oaked Chardonnay, fruit forward Pinot Noir, austere Petite Sirah, spicy Zin or Syrah, fresh Sauvignon Blanc, and a whole range of emerging varieties for the region like Viognier, Mourvedre, Malbec, Grenache and more. And, from one lot to the next, in the 45,000 acres that make up the Napa Valley, soils display different characteristics from one row to the next. Carneros Chardonnay, with fresh citrus and tropical notes, won't taste like Oak Knoll Chardonnay, which brings in more stone fruit and spice. Old vine Petite Sirah in Stag's Leap will be softer and more refined than newly planted vines in Calistoga, which will be much bolder, spicier and intense. It is why the region can appeal to so many different people with different palates. I too am a big fan of Napa Valley wines and always find it fun to discuss the land, the region and the wines with winemakers who work the land.

I recently had a chance to sit down with a few Napa winemakers, as their guest at various lunches or tastings, and taste some of their precious juice. Here are a few favorites from these meetings.

A few weeks ago I had a chance to sit down for coffee with the charming Jean-Charles Boisset while he was in Dallas celebrating his unique wine living experience at home designed to transport participants to one of the Boisset Family tasting room experiences which wrap luxury, quality and character around comfort and approachability, always making the guest feel special.

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Events + This Week



Jean-Charles (left) with another wine icon, Michel Rolland at the Napa Wine Auction in June

Jean-Charles is a busy wine entrepreneur and enthusiast, creating an impressive portfolio for his [Boisset Family Estates](#), including purchasing California's **DeLoach, Buena Vista, Raymond and Lockwood** in the past five years, as well as owning his JCB Wines, and dozen+ other Domaine and Chateau in his native France, as well as Italy and Canada.

Growing up in a wine family, the son Jean-Claude Boisset who founded the family winery in Burgundy in 1961, he knew early on that following the winery path was his destiny. But with Jean-Charles everything is about the history, the experience, and the luxury, especially within his most recent purchase, Raymond Estate in St. Helena, Napa Valley. Gorgeous, expansive and welcoming, every inch of the lush property is designed with purpose, filled with intricate touches to make guests to the winery feel as special as they are to the Boisset family. From Baccarat chandeliers lining the tank rooms to a luxurious red room able to be reserved for special tastings filled with game tables, pin ball machines, rich textiles and more chandeliers. Raymond also has a wall size meter visible as you enter their barrel room measuring their carbon footprint, a good gauge for the wineries dedication to producing in a cleaner, earth friendly environment.



Raymond Estates Carbon Footprint and Solar Energy Meter

In a place where grand Chateau-like estates are the norm and great tasting experiences can be had at any stop along the way up and down Highway 29, Raymond has created an atmosphere of sophistication, style and detailed luxury, much like Jean-Charles. If you want a more hands on experience, they even allow you to be winemaker for a day, making your own blend with their winemaker that they will then bottle, label and ship home to you. This experience not only helps you understand why blending is such an intricate and detailed part of the

Events		+ This Week
11/22/13 Fri	Beaujolais & Beyond Wine Festival	Irving Convention Center
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winemaking process, and you get to take home a wine created by you specifically to your taste.

I asked Jean-Charles why each of his California wineries were chosen to be a part of his portfolio and with a wide smile he explains it is because of their history and their story. The story is the special element that sets one apart from another. For instance, **Buena Vista** is the oldest producing winery in Sonoma County (founded in 1857,) known for their Pinot Noir that ranges in style from fruit forward and approachable to hearty and rich. They are wines with character and personality, much like the Burgundy Jean-Charles grew up loving.

Earlier this year I was in Napa and had a chance to sit down with winemaker Philippe Melka, a star in Napa Valley, consulting on over a dozen different projects while developing and maintaining his own brand, Melka Wines, with his wife, also a winemaker, Cherie. From Lail to Gemstone to Brand to Dana Estates to Vineyard 29 to Cliff Lede, his impressive list of clients producing great Napa Valley wine proves both how a skilled winemaker knows how to make great fruit shine, and how incredibly different each and every part of Napa Valley is from one end of the region to the next. Like the wines he consults for, his own wine, [Melka Wines](#), is dedicated to and defined by its superb quality.



Cherie and Philippe Melka at their offices off the Siverado Trail

Growing up in France, graduating from their University of Bordeaux with a degree in Geology, Philippe had an interest in wine, but only recreational. Quite happenstance in his final year of school he took a wine course and it change his path, moving on to complete his Masters in Agronomy and Enology, always interested in the way that soil can affect the wine and its quality. Traveling the world early on in his career, working at Chateau Haut Brion, Dominus Estate, Chittering Estate in Western Australia, Badia O Coltibuono in Tuscany, and Chateau Petrus, his interest in this relationship deepened, eventually deciding to settle in Napa Valley full time (though he continues to go back to his native France every year for both work and play.) He chose Napa because the distinct soil types from one spot to the next had such an impact on the wine. It may also be why he has chosen over the years to consult for so many different wineries, as each in his collection are very different in soil types, creating overall different styles of wine.

After several years only consulting in Napa, Philippe and Cherie started Melka Wines, using both fruit from vineyards they acquired as well as establishing long term contracts with some of the best growers in Napa (when you have Petrus, Dominus, Seavey and Lail on your resume you can be trusted to make good wine out of great grapes.) But good wasn't what the couple wanted, they wanted outstanding, and starting out very small, the first vintage was only 240 cases, they have achieved it. That first vintage, Melka Metisse 1996 showed his love for Bordeaux with a proprietary blend of 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc. This has continued with what has become his single vineyard designate Melka Metisse blends, defining their sense of place and the importance of terroir in each of their wines.

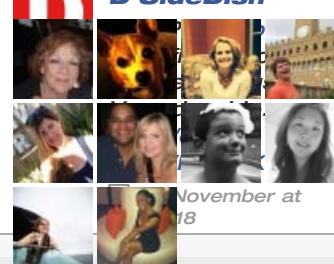
Melka Metisse 2010 Jumping Goat Vineyard is produced from 3.5 acres of sustainably certified vineyards in St. Helena. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot

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