

Wine

Resident wine expert Sandra Silfven on all things vino

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Buena Vista wines ready for a new century

BY SANDRA SILFVEN 0 COMMENTS

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Buena Vista is one of the oldest names in California wine history — a winery founded by the Hungarian Count Agoston Haraszthy in the late 1850s who would plant more than 250 acres to a host of European grape varieties and build a stone winery that still stands today. Haraszthy was a pioneer in modern California viticulture. His credits include creating the first gravity-flow winery in California; excavating the first wine caves in Sonoma; experimenting with native redwood trees for wine barrels; and employing premium European viticultural and enological practices.

By any standards, he would be a tough act to follow. But Jean-Charles Boisset, rooted in Burgundy and president of Boisset Family Estates, has transformed the brand with a massive renovation of the property, an upgrading of the viticulture, a new perspective on the wines and creation of a unique visitors' experience — all inspired by the heritage of the brand.

I recently tasted through the affordable Sonoma line, about \$15, available around Metro Detroit at many Costco stores, Cost Plus in Detroit, all the Plum Markets, and Market Square in Birmingham.

Did you know? Boisset also owns the California wineries DeLoach, Raymond, Lockwood, Amberhill, JCB by Jean-Charles Boisset, Frenchie Winery, Lyeth, California Rabbit and Sonoma Cuvee. Jean-Charles Boisset is married to Gina Gallo, granddaughter of Julio Gallo. Gina is the winemaker at Gallo Family Vineyards Sonoma. They are parents of twins and bought the home once lived in by Robert and Margrit Mondavi.

Buena Vista Sonoma Chardonnay 2011, \$15: The Chardonnay sings with varietal character — green apples, pear, citrus — spiced up and made more complex by oak and sporting flavors and mouthfeel that would pass for a far more expensive wine. It's a food wine — bring on the roasted chicken, the delicate pastas, the broiled seafood.

Buena Vista Sonoma Pinot Noir 2010, \$15: Good cherry-berry aromas, depth of flavor, complexity, intensity — folks this is a \$15 or less Sonoma Pinot. Made by a Frenchman with Burgundian DNA. It has to pass



(Courtesy of Buena Vista)

About Sandra Silfven

Sandra Silfven has written about wine for more than 25 years. She's a longtime copy editor at The Detroit News, as well as a former restaurant critic. Her advice to newbies: "If I can figure out this stuff, so can you!"



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his specs. It's the action in the mouth that astonishes — flavors are smooth, tannins supple, like molten chocolate on the back of the palate. It's a smart buy for the price.

Buena Vista Sonoma Sauvignon Blanc 2011, \$15: A ton of tart-crisp lime and lemon peel, honeydew melon, and tart-sweet apricot greet the nose. In the mouth, there is a seductive creaminess on the midpalate, filled in with the tart citrus and herbaceous notes. That herbaceous, citrus, mineral character makes for a long, satisfying finish. Such a fine wine for food — Michigan whitefish, pickerel and lake trout, or lightly sauced shrimp. It wakes up all the taste buds.

Buena Vista Sonoma Merlot 2010, \$15: I love Merlot, and I love the sassy blackberry, black cherry, dark plums, black licorice seasoned with cracked black pepper and brown cooking spices (nutmeg, clove). It's so big and flavorful and complex in the mouth, and coats the palate with sweet, dusty tannins off the skins.

Buena Vista Cabernet Sauvignon 2010, \$15: Cherries, blackberry, cocoa, cola. Note the sediment on the cork. It's an intense, concentrated wine that paints the palate with flavors, tannins. It's a wine fruit cocktail, with layers of flavor — a fun, fruit-forward Cabernet that lets it all hang out.

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