

# FOOD+WINE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2013 • SECTION D

AUCTION NAPA VALLEY 2013

## Lavish & Green

### AUCTION EVENTS

The auction weekend runs from Thursday through Sunday with a string of events. Here's an overview:

**Thursday** — Vintner Welcome Parties, 6 p.m. into the evening, at about a dozen wineries throughout Napa Valley.

**Friday** — The Napa Valley Barrel Auction from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Raymond Vineyards in St. Helena. In addition to bidding on futures, guests will get a peek at the live auction-lot displays and graze on dishes prepared by dozens of Napa Valley's top restaurants and food purveyors.

**Friday Night** — About 25 vintner hosted dinners throughout the valley, offering guests a chance to spend time with the vintners at their home or winery.

**Saturday** — The keystone event is the live auction at Meadowood Resort in St. Helena, where bidders will vie for 46 mega-lots. The affair is from noon to 8 p.m., with guests gathering for lunch at noon before bidding. Dinner and dancing to follow.

**Sunday** — Auction farewell brunch, 10 a.m. to noon at the Meadowood Resort.

**More information:** visit [www.napavalleyvintners.org](http://www.napavalleyvintners.org).



CHRISTOPHER CHUNG / The Press Democrat

Jean-Charles Boisset, president of Boisset Family Estates, is the host of this year's Auction Napa Valley at his Raymond Vineyards. Boisset wineries include DeLoach and Buena Vista.

Boisset promises eco-friendly venue for barrel event, a stylish prelude to Saturday's auction

By PEG MELNIK

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

The Crystal Cellar at Raymond Vineyards is a swanky spot, a cross between an edgy nightclub and a flamboyant French cellar — just one of the many places being prepped for this weekend's Auction Napa Valley.

Jean-Charles Boisset, who bought the winery in 2009, is playing host for the Napa Valley Barrel Auction, with 3,000 people expected to descend on the property Friday to bid, sip and graze.

The gathering at Raymond Vineyards is one of the key events that will kick off the annual four-day Auction Napa Valley, which runs through Sunday. There will be a string of dinner parties, tastings and tours throughout Napa Valley, with the main attraction the live auction Saturday at St. Helena's Meadowood Resort.

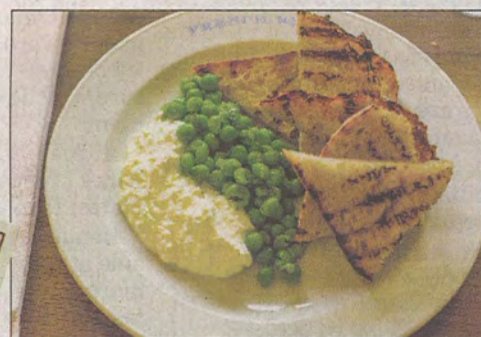
As for Boisset's event, he's busy grooming his 90-acre property to be the poster child for eco-friendly practices. Last month, the winery received its organic and Biodynamic certifications. The winery also just finished installing expansive solar panels.

While Boisset has made a colossal investment in remodeling Raymond to have a lavish interior, the vintner said his winery has a bolder environmental message to send Napa Valley.

"It's totally possible to be organic, Biodynamic and energy independent in Napa Valley," said the charismatic Frenchman, who then laughed and said, "Nature is screaming to welcome people here . . ."

"In a matter of seven years, the solar panels will be paid off and then we'll be totally energy independent for the following 38 years using the natural resource of the

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STORYCELLARS

Farmer's Cheese with Minted English Peas and Grilled Country Bread by Phillip Wang, chef at French Blue restaurant in St. Helena. It is among the dishes that will be served at Friday's Napa Valley Barrel Auction.

## Chefs serving up finger food for auction diners

By DIANE PETERSON

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

While there is no dearth of Michelin stars in the Napa Valley, many of the valley's newer restaurants are striving for a different kind of approval — return visits from locals.

That means creating a casual ambiance and a menu that won't break the bank. While saving the cost of white ta-

blecloths, however, chefs can still focus on well-crafted food that lets the local products shine alongside the wines.

"I wanted to open something very casual and affordable, quick and easy," said Todd Humphries, chef/owner of the Kitchen Door in Napa's Oxbow Market-place.

"It would be the kind of place where anybody could come once or twice a week."

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# LAVISH: A Raymond tour of treats in store

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sun," he said.

Boisset wouldn't disclose the price tag for the solar installation, joking, "I would not even remember what I spent last week."

He said the important thing is that they're investing in their passion — energy.

Walking through the property, Boisset pointed out potential spots for where they'll place the Gaggenau outdoor kitchen, the first attraction to greet guests.

Chef Michel Cornu will be preparing dishes with equipment that he says is popular in Europe and yet remains a mystery to most cooks in the United States. The induction range, which relies on an electromagnet to heat iron or steel cookware, is one example.

After exploring the kitchen, guests will roam through a series of tents that wrap around the Raymond guest house and pool area, each displaying some of the live lots, as well as a sampling of foods prepared by top chefs in Napa Valley. The tents will ultimately usher guests into the barrel room and the Crystal Cellar, where bidding will be in full swing.

After walking the grounds to check on progress, Boisset, 44, talked about things closer to home — his wife, Gina

Gallo, his twin girls and his environmental roots in Burgundy.

Boisset shows a picture of his 2-year-old twins — Honore-Josephine and Grace-Antoinette — from his BlackBerry phone.

"They're gorgeous," he said. "Now I'm really starting to get addicted."

The picture showed the girls with miniature horses on their 60-acre property, just miles from the winery.

Boisset leads his family's interests in North America for Boisset Family Estates, purchasing historic properties like Raymond, DeLoach Vineyards in Russian River Valley and Buena Vista Winery in the city of Sonoma.

He said living close to nature reminds him of his childhood in Burgundy and of his late grandmother, who taught him to be a steward of the land.

When Boisset resisted her piano lessons, they went outside instead and she taught him about everything from bees to pollen to composting. She never took medicine, he said, relying instead on homeopathic remedies from the garden.

"Back then I said if I ever got to own a property," he said, "I would never let it be anything other than organic."

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Staff writer Peg Melnik can be reached at 521-5310 or [peg.melnik@pressdemocrat.com](mailto:peg.melnik@pressdemocrat.com).