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Wine Line

Russ Winton: Buena Vista Winery re-visited

BY RUSS WINTON

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One of the first wineries the Navigator and I visited in the early 1970s was Buena Vista. The ivy-covered stone buildings were beautiful and the shade from huge eucalyptus trees provided the perfect picnic spot.

I'm not sure how many wine picnics we've had over the past 45 years, but the image of Buena Vista Winery always has stayed with me.

Ten years after our visit, Jean-Charles Boisset, age 11, visited his first California winery, Buena Vista, with his grandparents.

The image must have stayed with Jean-Charles as well. In 2011, the Boisset Family Estates purchased the winery.

Located just a few miles outside of Sonoma, the winery was established in 1857 by the self-proclaimed "Count" Agoston Haraszthy. In 1873, Buena Vista became California's first premium winery with international acclaim and awards.

Over the years, the winery endured depressions, phylloxera infestations, prohibition and earthquakes. The historic champagne cellars and caves had been closed to the public since 1989, and the ivy was probably the only thing holding up the stone buildings.

Buena Vista was in desperate need of a major face-lift (read earthquake retrofit and much more).

The Boisset Family Estates, with centuries of winemaking history in the Burgundy region of France, set out to restore the winery to its former glory. We paid a recent visit and were blown away.

Buena Vista is back. Blacktop replaced with Belgian cobblestones, the press house converted into a large tasting room and museum, the champagne cellars open with a beautiful water fountain just outside, access to the caves for a reserve tasting and an incredible all-white bubble room, for a bit of the sparkling.

There are plenty of picnic tables, so bring your own or order a French Hamper for Two.

You can find more about the history, the winery and its outstanding wines at www.buenavistawinery.com.

Jean-Charles Boisset is in charge of his family's California operations, which includes DeLoach Vineyards, Raymond Vineyards, Lyeth Estates and JCB. After our visit to Buena Vista, the

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Navigator suggested we put these wineries on our must-visit list. I did. They're at the top.

Cheers to Jean-Charles and the Boisset Family Estates for saving Buena Vista! And thanks for keeping my Buena Vista image alive.

What's on our table

The 2012 Rancho Zabaco Sonoma Heritage Vines Zinfandel is a steal at \$9.99 (Costco). Big and bold with black fruit flavors and a touch of pepper. The SRP for this 90 rated wine is \$13.99 and is perfect for grilled meats.

A big Zin for under \$10 – are you kidding me? Buy all you can. Cheers!

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