



Napa Valley Register.com 58° Overcast Weekly Forecast sponsored by Blue Oak School

Great care doesn't stop when your cancer treatment ends. St. Joseph Health Queen of the Valley

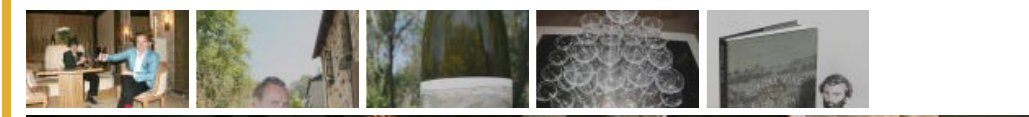
HOT TOPICS NAPA SCHOOL BUDGET · LATINO SENIOR NIGHTS · EDWARDS WINS AT SONOMA · PAROLE DENIED FOR FATAL C

Home / Lifestyles / Food / Wine

R Napa Valley Register On Wine Follow @nvrwine 971 follow

Buena Vista Winery: Its past is its future

Tweet 5 Print Email



Sitting in the Bubble Lounge, Count Agoston Haraszthy (George Buy Now



Most viewed Most commented

- 1 Pickup truck destroys garage in north Napa house
2 Napa police officer charged with DUI, hit and run
3 Napa gynecologist gets five years' probation from state
4 Gay activists seek change of Fourth of July parade marshal
5 Napa doctor sentenced to prison for tax fraud

Flyerboard YOUR FLYER HERE Advertise your local business, listing, or event on the Flyerboard.

Webber) looks on as Jean-Charles Boisset discusses his plans for the historic Buena Vista Winery that Haraszthy founded in 1857.

June 19, 2014 11:20 am • Sasha Paulsen

(0) Comments

In 1850s, a Hungarian adventurer, a man of boundless ideas and enthusiasm, arrived in Sonoma, after a varied career that included creating a town in Wisconsin, serving as a sheriff in San Diego, and being charged with embezzling gold while working at the San Francisco Mint. (The charges were later dropped.)

At each stop along the way, the self-named "Count" Agoston Haraszthy, an ardent agronomist, planted wine grapes, but it was not until he came to Sonoma that he found the place where his dream of "purple gold" would thrive.

Haraszthy bought a dry-farmed vineyard, and in 1857 opened a stone winery named "Buena Vista — "beautiful view." This, California's first premium winery, was the expression of his passionate conviction that California could create exceptional wines.

According to Buena Vista's "History of California Wine," Haraszthy predicted that "wine-growing in this State will, before long, exceed in value the amount of gold exported."

Relentlessly, he promoted the idea through work and research. He and his son, Arpad, who had studied in Champagne, brought back roots and vines from Europe, as many as 300 varietals, inspiring other winemakers. These were the glory days of Buena Vista.

Unfortunately, the history recounts, "his grand ambition for the future of the wine industry far exceeded the demand for California wine and Agoston Hazasthy de Mokea, the insatiable Count of Buena Vista, was ultimately forced out of his creation by his own investors."

Harazthy went next to Nicaragua, where he disappeared after falling from a tree into an alligator infested river.

In subsequent years Buena Vista endured the rocky fate of an early California winery, trials that included phylloxera, Prohibition, and a public whose tastes tended to beer and whiskey. Wine production ceased as Hazasthy's mansion became the home of a wealthy couple who eschewed grapes for to raise more than 200 angora cats. Wine production resumed when when a journalist Frank Bartholomew and his wife Antonia bought the property in 1943. They brought to it their friend, Andrei Tchelisteff, the Russian immigrant and European trained winemaker who lead California into

A Napan's visit to Boissetland



Anyone who's watched Jean-

Charles Boisset's trajectory in California probably wonders about his origins in France. [Read more](#)

Visiting Buena Vista Winery

Buena Vista Winery is at 18000 Old Winery Road in Sonoma, about five minutes from Sonoma's downtown plaza. The winery is open daily for tours and tasting from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding major holidays. Special activities include a free "Count of Buena Vista" performance; family tours of the Champagne Cellars (\$10 per adult; kids free); barrel tours and tastings (\$35 per person) and a "Be the Count" blending experience (\$100 per person; \$80 for Wine Club members); reservations are required. Picnic hampers may ordered 24 hours in advance. For more information or to make reservations, visit the website, BuenaVistaWinery.com.



Local advertising by PaperG

Inside Napa Valley

Open publication - Free publishing **Deals, Offers and Events**

Bell Products, Inc. - your heating, air conditioning and plumbing specialist

Bell Products has been building relationships in Northern Cali...



We offer free estimates on our services, including: collision repair, paint matching, frame straightening, refinishing and more!

Visit us today!

Romance Package

2 night minimum stay in a Superior Guestroom or Suite



Manufacturer warranty included in every product!

Check out our website for all of our STIHL products!



5 signs spring is on the way

<http://ow.ly/u616v>



a new era of winemaking. Nonetheless, the winery passed on to a series of owners, corporate and private.

A century after Harasthy's disappearance, a French schoolboy visiting California with his grandparents, came to Buena Vista. They were travelers from Burgundy, where the wine-making history goes back 2,000 years, yet as Jean-Charles Boisset describes it, "I thought this place was magic.

"We tasted the wine back in our hotel room," Boisset said. Returning and someday restoring the property, he said, "became an *idée fixe*."

As the Boisset family wine interests grew from their Burgundy base into an international enterprise, Boisset returned to California, first as a student and then to manage their U.S. interests. He purchased Raymond Vineyards in St. Helena and DeLoach Vineyards in Sonoma, but had not forgotten Buena Vista.

"I was obsessed," Boisset said. In 2011, he was finally able to purchase the old winery, and "working in partnership with the Count," he said, he set out to rebuild and "continue the Count's vision."

Buena Vista today

To find Buena Vista in its secluded setting against the eastern Sonoma hills, leave your car in the asphalt parking lot and stroll along a forested path, marked by banners that tell the winery's history. Chronologically, they move from the present to the past, concluding with the Native Americans who first lived in this tranquil spot, and underscoring the eerie sense that you are moving back in time, even before the two simple old stone buildings that hold California's history become visible. And then the Count himself appears.

OK, it is really George Webber, the engaging history buff who leads tours in Sonoma and Napa, but his elegant manners not to mention his top hat and cutaway coat, set the spell of Buena Vista to work on the imaginative: Has the ghost of the Haraszthy escaped the crocodiles of Nicaragua to hover over his beloved Buena Vista?

The Count is next joined by M. Boisset himself, in modern dress but nonetheless the perfect counterpart for a ebullient dreamer from another century.

"This beautiful lady was a bit faded," Boisset said, gesturing to the Press House, that has become the tasting room. "The most important thing was to revive wine-making in the most historic wine building in California."

For Boisset, this goal included making the historic Buena Vista wines, planting the furmint grapes, the most widely grown variety in the Count's native Hungary, and bringing to life again the second Buena Vista building, the Champagne Cellar, which had been unused for decades.

EXPLORE MORE



Visit Walla Walla

From **\$119*** each way

Book by June 23rd

[BOOK NOW](#)









Alaska Airlines

*Terms apply. See site for details.


SPEND LESS


Marketplace


- Homes
- Jobs
- Cars


<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">Charming Napa Condo</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">\$435,000 Cyndi Gates Gates Estates</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">Advertise Home for Sale</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">SPACE AVAILABLE Reserve this Space Today! Call Randy Principe - 256-2251</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">Golfer's Paradise</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">\$1,975,000 Kathy Luebcke ShowNapa</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">Wine Country Estate</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">\$3,695,000 Carolyn Roberts Coldwell Banker</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">West Side St. Helena</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">\$899,000 Cyd Greer Coldwell Banker</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">Charming Saint Helena</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">\$1,700,000 Cyd Greer Coldwell Banker</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">Advertise Home for Sale</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">SPACE AVAILABLE Reserve this Space Today! Call Randy Principe - 256-2251</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="background-color: #0070c0; color: white; padding: 2px; margin: -5px -5px 5px -5px;">Fantastic St. Helena Home</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">\$1,295,000 Tim Hayden Pacific Union</p> </div>

Featured Businesses

- 

Vallerga's Market
- 

Napa Electric
- 

Adobe Lumber & Decking Center
- 

Advanced Auto Body Center

Today, the Cellar is the center of winemaking, the deep cellars once again hold barrels of aging wine. To this Boisset has added one of his dazzling strokes of fancy: A "Bubble Lounge," decorated in the Art Deco style of the 1920s and '30s, with oyster-colored furnishings, a gleaming white player piano and towers of glistening Champagne glasses.

"A little surprise," Boisset said, pouring some of the Champagne he brings in from France. "We want to engage people in a fun but noble way, to provide a sense of history, and a sense of time, of timelessness. The future of Buena Vista is the past."

In contrast to this speakeasy luxury, the tasting room in the old Press House suggests a more rugged, early California adventure. Here, a mannequin sheriff stands guard by a display of Buena Vista Legendary Badge, a robust red blend, the bottle of which is emblazoned with a gold badge honoring the Count's days as a sheriff.

Other displays in the room include recount the history of Buena Vista; a preserved crocodile dangles from the ceiling, hat in teeth, a wordless reminder of the Count's unfortunate finish.

"We need to be true to our history and to the quality of the wine for our children," said Boisset, as he introduced the Buena Vista wines. Boisset is married to Gina Gallo of the Gallo wine-making family, and they have twin daughters.

Among the wines are a Private Reserve chardonnay and pinot noir; the Vinicultural Society collection of small-production wines that "honor the winery's pioneering spirit and contribution to California wine-making"; the Heritage collection that includes an imported Hungarian Tokaji Aszú, a Cream Sherry, Port and the La Victoire Champagne; a Carneros Collection, and The Count," the "Founders Red wine that honors Haraszthy's "legacy and bold vision."

Buena Vista wines now sold in 25 countries, Boisset noted, although many of the wines are available only at the winery.

Work is still underway on the restoration, Boisset said as he described plans to come, everything from a heritage garden to theater in the plaza.

On July 12, Buena Vista will host a Living History day, that will include a re-enactment of the Bear Flag Revolt, in which Boisset will play the part of Victor Proudron. Visitors are encouraged to come in period costume of the 1860s and learn about the history of Buena Vista, said Boisset who has also commissioned a book, "Sonoma Wine and the Story of Buena Vista," which was written by the noted local historian, Charles L. Sullivan.

From Aug. 7-24, the winery will present Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew.

Details for these and other winery events are available at the website, BuenaVistaWinery.com.

Is there an irony that it's a Frenchman who is so enthusiastically introducing the legacy of California wine?

"It's part of discovering America," Boisset said. "I think people in the U.S. want to feel their identity, their history. We are here to engage people with

Find a local business v

View all of our featured businesses

View all of our deals, offers and events

Weekend features



Flood bypass eradicates last vestige of Napa's Chinatown

The last vestige of Napa's long-gone Chinatown -- a spit of land at the juncture of the Napa River and Napa Creek in downtown -- is about to unceremoniously disappear.

June 21, 2014 12:00 pm (9)



Napa children with Down syndrome unique, but not alone, in school Jun 14



Napa explores tax to fund river dredging May 24



Priced out of Napa May 17



BottleRock is a dream come true for Napa band May 10

Advertisers

Saxon Leonard Law Firm

Crown Hill Stone Supply



Published on 6/22/2014

this. We want people to come here to enjoy themselves, to take time to enjoy their time. 'American' is a phenomenal way of life.

"It's fun to have dreams and to help people to dream," Boisset added. "What is exciting is to help create the dream. Our dream -- the dream of the Count and I -- is really to bring (forward) the vision of history, music, art, food, the past."

Sitting quietly beside him, "The Count" smiled.

If the ghost of the founder of Buena Vista is, indeed, anywhere in the vicinity, he is surely one happy spirit.

Copyright 2014 Napa Valley Register. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Tags Jean-charles Boisset, Buena Vista Winery, Agoston Haraszthy

[View \(0\) Comments](#)

More Wine Stories

Hill Wine Co. files for bankruptcy

New winemaker at Chateau Montelena

Lake County, windy wines getting better all the time



A Napan's visit to Boissetland

Trending Articles and Offers

ADVERTISEMENT



Shocking 10 second joint relief trick that's twice as powerful as glucosamine plus chondroitin.



Saint Helena arrest records. Who do you know?



It doesn't take as long as you think to speak a new language fluently.



Gorgeous New Tanner Flying Off Shelves

Recommendations

[Car flips over, lands in ditch](#) (Napa Valley Register)

Sponsored Links

[Beringer Winery](#)



Published on 6/17/2014

[View more»](#)

[SEARCH ALL ADS](#)

Beringer 2 for 1 Tasting

beringer.com/Tasting

Beringer Vineyards- Est. Napa 1876. Get 2 for 1 Tastings Pricing Offer

