

THE WINE ECONOMIST



Looking Back at the European Invasion of California Wine

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The Beatles' Boeing 707 landed in the USA on February 7, 1964 and pop music has never been the same. It isn't that the British Invasion conquered American pop music as much as that a creative dynamic was accelerated. The influence can still be felt more than 50 years later.

Another invasion took place from about 1970 to 1990 when a number of Europeans made significant wine investments in the United States, stirring the creative pot in ways big and small. Last week I talked about the Skalli family's Mondavi-inspired investment in [St Supéry](#) and the recent sale of that property to the brothers who own Chanel. That event got me to thinking about the other invaders. Where are they now? Here are a few quick case studies.



Boisset Comes, Goes, Returns

Chandon was not the only French firm to invest in the California wine industry. [Boisset](#), known today for DeLoach, Raymond, and Buena Vista wineries among others, came on the scene in the early 1980s. In fact, Boisset sold Robert Skalli the Rutherford property on Highway 29 that became the [St Supéry](#) winery.



Boisset first entered the California market as an importer and producer in 1980. The Rutherford property was purchased in 1982 (the Victorian home you see there was used as a summer residence for a couple of years). But it was sold to Skalli in 1984 as the result of a strategic shift to focus to building the company back in France rather than expanding further into California.

Jean-Charles Boisset returned in California in 2003 with the DeLoach purchase and has gone on to become an integral part of the wine industry here with a large wine portfolio and deep local roots. He is married to Gina Gallo and the couple live in the old Robert Mondavi house.