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THE BUENA VISTA WINERY IS REBORN

*Visionary Jean Charles Boisset Revitalizes The Historic Sonoma Winery
With Passion And His Always Present Joie de Vivre*

BY ANN LINGLE

SONOMA, CALIFORNIA, has been the site of the Buena Vista Winery since 1857 when Agoston Haraszthy, the self-proclaimed “Count,” began California’s first premium winery. He wanted to produce fine wine in Sonoma and used his winery as his viticultural laboratory. He created the first gravity flow winery in California, excavated the first wine caves and experimented with redwood barrels for aging and fermenting. As if that weren’t enough, he brought over 300 different varieties from Europe to California.



OPPOSITE TOP A beautifully restored room at the winery. **TOP RIGHT** Jean Charles Boisset and "Count Haraszthy." **BOTTOM RIGHT** The attention to detail is included in the Buena Vista Winery label designs.

Wine History

PHOTOGRAPH BY DREW KELLY



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID WAKELEY



PHOTOGRAPH BY DREW KELLY



OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE BEGINNING LEFT TO RIGHT Wine Tools Museum vignette. Wine tool installation. Barrel room at Buena Vista Winery. **LEFT** View of the magnificent gardens and tasting room. **BOTTOM LEFT** A tranquil setting for enjoying a beautiful Sonoma day.



Despite his success, Buena Vista had financial problems in the late 1800s and ceased production. Other catastrophes occurred like the 1906 earthquake, the phylloxera epidemic and Prohibition.

In 1943 the winery was bought sight unseen by Antonia and Frank Bartholomew and they eventually hired famed winemaker Andre Tchelistcheff as consulting winemaker. Their first post-Prohibition vintage in 1949 was very successful, giving the winery a new life. In 1968 the winery was sold again. The new owner, international wine merchant Marcus Moller-Racke, turned Buena Vista into a popular brand but it was not the fine wine that the original owners had envisioned.

Things changed for the better when Jean-Charles Boisset, Proprietor of Boisset Collection in Burgundy, France, purchased the winery in May 2011. He appreciated the historical importance of the winery to California, and so began an extensive restoration of the winery from 2011 to 2015. He has now returned Buena Vista Winery into the winery that Count Haraszthy had predicted 150 years ago.

There are now many ways visitors can be tempted to visit this historic winery. Tastings and tours are given year-round. Tours include a Barrel Tasting and Cave Tour in the newly restored champagne cellars with the tasting done straight from the barrels. The Historical Winery Tour is a docent-led journey back in time while the Private Reserve Tasting features a wine educator helps visitors experience fine wines in the private reserve lounge.

Other experiences include a visit to the Wine Tool Museum, blending your own wine and family tours of the champagne cellars. All in all, the Buena Vista Winery now offers a range of experiences for anyone who wishes to both taste fine wines and enjoy a peek into California's wine past. **CH**

Buena Vista Winery
18000 Old Winery Road
Sonoma, CA 95476
www.buenavistawinery.com