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THE *tasting* panel


MAGAZINE

Buena Vista proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset brings the past to life with the historic winery's founder, Count Agoston Haraszthy, played by character actor George Webber.



LIVING *Legacy*

**BUENA VISTA AND BOISSET
CELEBRATE SONOMA VALLEY**

A photograph of three men in a winery cellar. Two men are sitting on large wooden barrels, and one man is standing in the center. They are all holding glasses of champagne. The background is filled with more barrels and cellar equipment.

Victory and wine in hand as Winemaker Brian Maloney, Jean-Charles Boisset and George Webber as Count Agoston Haraszthy toast 160 years of winemaking at Buena Vista.

Victory AT HAND

A Bespoke Champagne
COMPLETES BUENA VISTA'S RENAISSANCE

BY DEBORAH PARKER WONG · PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER RUBIN



Inspired by Buena Vista's original footprint spanning Sonoma and Napa counties, Buena Vista Napa Valley "Revenge" red wine is adorned with a crocodile, the reptile said to have been responsible for Haraszthy's untimely demise.

As

Sonoma's historic Buena Vista Winery enters its stately 160th year, Boisset Collection proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset has more than an anniversary to celebrate. After rescuing the dormant and seismically unsound winery from certain destruction, Boisset can claim victory over the forces of nature and a victory for generations of wine enthusiasts who will experience California wine history at its nascent origin.

In realizing his vision for the renaissance of Buena Vista, which has now come to full fruition, Boisset himself has been a veritable force of nature. "The winery was shuttered by the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989 and, according to the restoration team, it would not have survived another quake of that magnitude," said Boisset, who purchased the estate in 2011 and embarked on an ambitious restoration plan that won the prestigious California Preservation Design Award for Craftsmanship/Preservation Technology in 2013.

Boisset reopened Buena Vista to the public with fanfare on August 31, 2012, the day marking the 200th birthday of founder Count Agoston Haraszthy, and the retrofitted winery took its rightful place on the National Register of Historic Places. A unique core-drilling technology employed by Architectural Resources Group lead architect Naomi Miroglio left the 1857 façade intact but strengthened its crumbling walls, and the winery remained untouched by an earthquake that struck south Napa just two years later. "Had it not been retrofitted, an essential part of California's wine history would have been lost forever," said Boisset, a narrow escape for the structure, which now lives to tell its tale.



Jean-Charles Boisset leads a tasting of current Buena Vista releases in an inviting salon housed on the second floor of the winery.



Buena Vista sparkling rosé harkens back to a popular sparkling wine that was produced and sold at the winery in 1861 under the name Eclipse.

THE HISTORICAL FOOTPRINT



Innovative branding connects an expansive range of modern-day wines to the winery's historic past.



A newly-planted heritage vineyard greets visitors as they stroll to the tasting room.

Not content with rebuilding the winery, Boisset has begun building bridges using Buena Vista's original footprint as a template for expanding the winery's portfolio. According to Charles L. Sullivan, author of *Sonoma Wine and the Story of Buena Vista*, the 560-acre estate that Haraszthy purchased from Julian Rose in 1857 was part of Rancho Huichica, the original Mexican land grant sited east of the town of Sonoma. By 1858, Haraszthy bought an additional 4,000 acres of land that ran over the foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains through Lovall Valley and into Napa County. This expansion and the planting of tens of thousands of vines in Napa County made Buena Vista one of the largest agricultural estates in California. Today, Buena Vista's original Napa County footprint lies within the Los Carneros AVA.

By creating a range of wine styles that are intentionally crafted with a variety of tastes in mind, Buena Vista Winemaker Brian Maloney, who collaborates with consulting winemaker David Ramey, has built out the upper end of the Buena Vista portfolio to reflect the quality of the vineyards at his disposal.

In 2013, Maloney sourced and created a Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon as an homage to Haraszthy's passion for viticulture and the estate that stretched across both counties. The 2013 Château Buena Vista Napa Valley "Revenge" red wine is aromatic with pronounced notes of red and black currant, tobacco, vanilla and a full complement of baking spices. The label depicts Haraszthy's historic winery building, the first grand château to be built in Sonoma Valley. The Buena Vista 2013 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon was released in June of 2016 with national distribution and a retail price of \$50. Maloney has also crafted a 2014 Private Reserve Chardonnay (\$50) that shows the purity, elegance and finesse of a Premier Cru in Burgundy. For this wine he selected the Thornton Vineyard on Sonoma Mountain, which runs across the ledge above the Durrell Vineyard.

BESPOKE CHAMPAGNE

The 19th-century wine lover was as fond, and perhaps even fonder, of sparkling wine than those who visit the winery today. In unearthing the winery's history as a "Champagne" cellar, Boisset embarked on a four-year project and an unprecedented gesture—the creation of a new Champagne brand awarded to the winery as Buena Vista La Victoire Champagne.

"The Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC) granted the creation of the brand based on Buena Vista's provenance as the first commercial producer of sparkling wine on the West Coast," said Boisset when he presented the distinct La Victoire bottle taken from a 17th-century mold.

In blending La Victoire, which is produced in Reims, France, Boisset and his Buena Vista winemaking team, led by Maloney, sought out Premier Cru Pinot Noir vineyards in Montagne de Reims and looked to the Grand Cru vineyards of Mesnil-sur-Oger and Chouilly to source Chardonnay. With aromas of brioche and lightly-roasted

nuts, the Pinot Noir-dominant blend is 30 percent Chardonnay with a markedly low 8.7 g/l dosage.

"We learned that the Count's eldest son, Arpad, studied the production of *méthode champenoise* at the House of Venoges in Épernay for two years," said Boisset. "After his return to the winery, Buena Vista produced a popular sparkling wine which was sold in 1861 under the name Eclipse." With an initial production of just 5,000 bottles,

La Victoire will be priced at \$50, with reserve Cuvées offered at the winery for \$75 and \$85.

With the arrival of La Victoire, the estate's first floor Bubble Lounge, an Art Deco and Christian Louboutin-inspired interior themed in winter white, will be pouring flights of bespoke Champagne in addition to several of the delicious Bourgogne crémants that Boisset created under the JCB label.



Estate wine being racked in to custom oak cuvées for maturation prior to bottling.



The Art Deco and Louboutin-inspired Bubble Lounge provides the perfect backdrop for experiencing Boisset's bespoke Champagne, Buena Vista La Victoire Champagne.

AN EXPERIENTIAL JOURNEY

Through a series of truly unique guest experiences, a visit to Buena Vista has become much more than a wine tasting. It's now an experiential journey, one that includes the masterful character acting of George Webber, who portrays Count Agoston Haraszthy, and his protégés, who lead blending and tasting sessions.

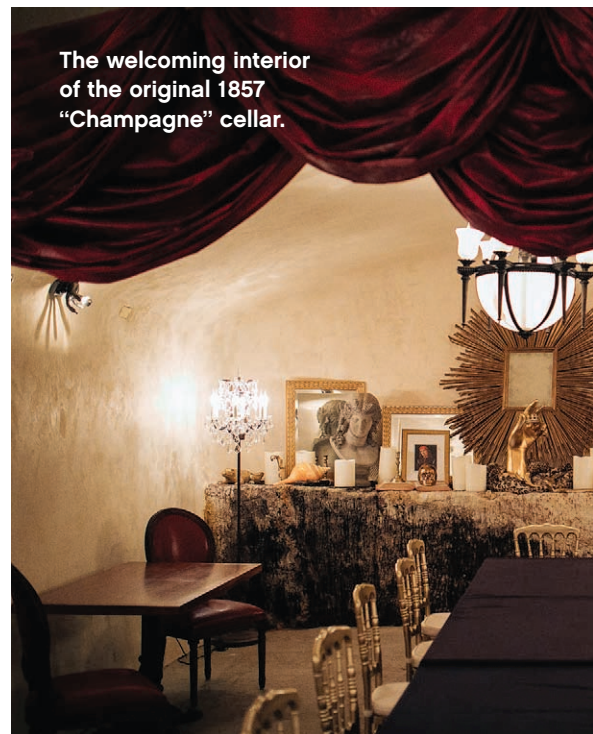
The decision to retain the authentic, rustic nature of the stone structure while creating a seemingly effortless and expansive level of comfort within its stone walls is reminiscent of the approach that's often taken with renovating old stone structures in France. Boisset has been heard to say that he's "not interested in doing anything in a purely conventional way." While his playful nature is readily apparent in the execution of each space within the winery and tasting room, his interpretation, which adheres to the authenticity of Buena Vista's history like a well fitted glove, infuses the visitor experiences with energy and vitality.

There are two museum displays to discover at Buena Vista—one on the upper floor of the tasting room and the second on the third floor of the winery building—but you won't find humdrum experiences.

Boisset has transformed the stairway and the third floor of the winery in to a dramatically-lit and theatrically-displayed collection of rare and authentic 19th- and 20th-century European viticulture tools. An extension of the Boisset family's original collection in Burgundy, which is housed at the Imaginarium at Louis Bouillot in Nuits-St-Georges, the Historical Tool Museum takes guests on a light- and sound-filled journey through the cultivation of wine and the art of barrel making through the ages.

As a catalyst of French and American culture, Boisset is an expatriate who fosters a deep connection to the history of his adopted country. "We love history; we were taught to treasure it. And in reviving Buena Vista, we have saved a national treasure that will be enjoyed for generations to come."

What one man has achieved in five years, many would be hard pressed to attempt in a lifetime. Boisset has fully realized his vision for Buena Vista as the historic point of origin for wine in Sonoma County. The rising visitor count is a testament that the allure of the experiences waiting at Buena Vista are undeniable. The re-envisioned spaces within the walls of the original stone winery and tasting room exude warmth and hospitality; they invite discovery and reward curiosity for those who want a glimpse of California's wine past and a taste of her future. ■■



The welcoming interior of the original 1857 "Champagne" cellar.



Vintner Jean-Charles Boisset is not interested in doing anything in a purely conventional way.



A Champagne saber poised to release Buena Vista La Victoire Champagne from its 17th century-inspired bottle.

