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Photo by Alexander Rubin

The Next Generation of **RAYMOND VINEYARDS**

An Eye to the Past *and*
a Vision for the Future

BY LAYNE RANDOLPH | PHOTOS COURTESY OF RAYMOND VINEYARDS

RAYMOND'S 50-YEAR HISTORY

Napa Valley's history traces back 170 years to the 1860s when the original pioneers came to settle, and California wine country was but a dream. Wine country began to boom post-Gold-Rush but halted during the eras of phylloxera and Prohibition in the early 20th century. Luckily for the wine world, Napa eventually rebuilt itself and experienced a second heyday in the 1970s when several local wines were recognized internationally at the Judgment of Paris.

Roy Raymond and his family arrived in Napa Valley in 1933. In 1970, Roy and his two sons planted vines on a 90-acre estate property in Rutherford, the current site of Raymond Vineyards. They released their first vintage in 1974, and this year, Raymond Vineyards celebrates its 50th anniversary in the valley.

"Raymond was one of the iconic Napa Valley families 50 years ago," said the winery's current owner, Jean-Charles Boisset. "At that time, there were the powerful personalities of Mondavi, Beringer, Krug, and others building the wine country."

This kind of historical pedigree appeals to Boisset, the unofficial historian of California wine country, and it played a large part in

his decision to purchase the five-generation winemaking family's estate in 2009. He kept the Raymond name as a reminder of the winery's story. He even kept a few members of the Raymond family for years after the acquisition, including Krisi Raymond and her father and former winemaker, Walter.

"That's the whole idea for us—to pay tribute to the 50 years of the Raymond dynasty. We did not replace the Raymond name with ours because we are proud of what Raymond has accomplished over the last 100 years, from the grandfather to the parents, through five generations," Boisset explained. "It's 50 years of incredible history. But our goal is always to build from what we have from the past."

"It's what we call the next generation of Raymond."

As part of the 50th anniversary celebrations this year, Boisset has unveiled "The Eye," Raymond Vineyards' latest commissioned outdoor sculpture - the giant JCB Eye modeled on Boisset's own by artist Tony Tasset. It is made of resin and fiberglass with a steel inner frame, stands almost ten feet tall, and shows a reflection of the Mayacamas Mountains. 🍷

“This Eye, monumental and piercing, is more than a sculpture. It is a sentinel of art, watching over our vineyards, symbolizing our commitment to seeing the world differently through the lens of beauty, innovation, and artistry,” said Boisset.

It is, in essence, a statue dedicated to Boisset—after all, it is his eye—and an abstract sculpture of the man many consider a visionary. It is also—excuse the pun—eye-catching and adds a refreshingly bold and surprising contrast to the pastoral landscape views. But Boisset emphasizes that the sculpture is a representation of *Raymond’s* vision.

“Raymond pays tribute to great winemaking, organic farming, and now, to the arts. The Eye is the vision for the future of Napa Valley.”



Winemaker for a Day Experience
Photo by Alexander Rubin



Photo by Lowell Dorzney, Art+Clarity

VISION 1 FOR THE FUTURE: GREAT WINEMAKING

Building on the past includes retaining star Winemaker and Vice President of Winemaking Stephanie Putnam since 2009 and adding Vineyard Manager Sophie Drucker. A female-led team wouldn’t have happened 50 years ago, and its significance resonates with Boisset; it is a nod to the present and future. “It’s the sensibility and emotion of great minds. The wines are eloquent, extremely sophisticated, and refined, with an incredible feminine touch. So, it’s not just about the tannins; it’s about beautiful, feminine power with a velvet glove.”

Boisset believes that with Putnam and Drucker’s talents, the quality of Raymond wines knows no limits. The vision includes enhancing their Cabernet Sauvignon program to one of the best Cabernets in Napa Valley. “It is very different than what our parents used to make, which was very high in alcohol, very tannic, very deep and dark and ripe. Today, we are making very drinkable wines that are elegant, refined, soft, and still very powerful.”

The critics agree. The 2019 Raymond *Generations* Cabernet Sauvignon received 97 points from *JebDunnuck.com*, and the 2020 vintage received 93 points from *Wine Enthusiast*.

“Raymond pays tribute to great winemaking, organic farming, and now, to the arts. The Eye is the vision for the future of Napa Valley.”

—Jean Charles Boisset

VISION 2 FOR THE FUTURE: SUSTAINABLE VITICULTURE

After taking over the Raymond estate, the Boisset team set to work on transforming it into a certified organic and biodynamic operation. “Part of Raymond’s concept is the vision of organic farming, which is the future of Napa Valley.” Today, the Raymond vineyards are certified organic by the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) and Certified Biodynamic by Demeter USA. They are also certified by Napa Green, Fish Friendly Farming, and the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance.

Boisset owns the most certified organic and biodynamic acres in Napa Valley and Sonoma County, with 191 acres, and 85 percent of the annual energy needs at Boisset’s California winemaking facilities are met with solar panels.

The Raymond vineyard team maintains biodiversity within the estate vineyard property, uses cover crops, and applies biodynamic-specific preparations and composts. Sheep, goats, and chickens provide some of the compost that nourishes the vineyards.

VISION 3 FOR THE FUTURE: THE RAYMOND EXPERIENCE

With Boisset’s vision, the winery embraces the theatrical world and gives visitors a singular experience. This year, Raymond is launching SOCIETY 74 – a membership experience that elevates what a winery membership can be, with exclusive spaces available only for members, like a SOCIETY 74 Lounge. Much is happening at the Rutherford site as Raymond embarks on a three-year transformation that begins with a new outdoor area and fountain and continues with indoor renovations, culinary experiences, and added theatrical tasting environments.

Raymond has partnered with Nimbus Arts to add a new dimension to Raymond’s offerings: Art. The winery will host events throughout the year, allowing guests a series of creative, artistic moments to make art on-site, such as painting their wine labels. “Bringing the arts to wine country is something we very much want to do on a big scale. Raymond has a tremendous footprint for great events and beautiful outdoors.”

This April, Raymond will host a Generations release event to kick off the year’s anniversary theme of Life in Red, with guests encouraged to dress in red and black. “Raymond is all about red. It’s how you live your life in red,” Boisset said. Raymond’s famous Red Room, complete with red velvet sofas, red ceilings, and more, illustrates the red life. “There are phenomenal decorations that you’ll see popping up at Raymond because a great life should be lived in red, similar to [the aesthetic of] Valentino and many fashion houses that love red like we do.”

The release event will be the first in a series of celebratory occasions throughout the year. September will bring a special 50th harvest anniversary with—what else—a red carpet celebration.

VISION 4: PAYING HOMAGE TO THE PAST

The Boisset Collection comprises wineries throughout California and France, Boisset’s homeland. He hails from Burgundy, where his family owns historically significant

vineyards and wineries. Boisset has been fascinated with history since childhood; his grandparents were schoolteachers and history teachers. Because he grew up surrounded by history and history buffs, he appreciates the need to preserve historical locations and keep the memories of the valley’s pioneers alive.

“I’ve been fascinated with American history since I was born because America is the most interesting country on the planet. It’s my favorite—I could not live anywhere else. I was always fascinated with the Gold Rush, cowboys and Indians, and the discovery of America. I’m in love with America.”

He has exercised his passion for American history by restoring and preserving iconic pieces of California’s past, like Buena Vista Winery, California’s first premium winery and a place Boisset visited with his family when he was 11. “Similar to the Buena Vista winery, which is the first California winery we acquired, we pay homage to the legacy of the past. It is like our Oakville Grocery, the first wine merchant and grocery store in the heart of Napa Valley.” The Oakville Grocery is on the National Register of Historic Places; the 1881 grocery store initially offered provisions to the first wine country adventurers.

Boisset continues to expand his portfolio of historically significant locales and treasures from the past, including the Kitchen Memories Collection at the Elizabeth Spencer Winery in Rutherford,

which has an entire museum of kitchen-related antiques. The Elizabeth Spencer tasting room is in a historic 1872 brick post office. “And we’ve acquired some of the oldest Victorian homes in the area, like The Ink House. We also have the Calistoga Depot Distillery, which is all about the history of Calistoga, the Gold Rush, and Sam Brannan (founder of San Francisco’s first newspaper, The California Star).”

His focus on the past gains much attention, but he is equally interested in Napa Valley’s prospects and potential. “The new generation of Raymond is the vision of the past, the present, and the future, defending the story of the past while living the present with an eye towards the future. I think we are here to build the future. We are the shareholders of the Raymond vision.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.raymondvineyards.com



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Garford Media



Photo by Alexander Rubin