



Paul Franson



JCB Tasting salon and Atelier

I got a chance to visit the JCB tasting salon and attached Atelier gourmet food shop, and it's going to become a must destination for visitors to the valley – but it also has attractions for locals, too.

Though Yountville requires tasting rooms to sell products other than wine (the opposite of those in unincorporated areas, which are prohibited from doing so!), Jean-Charles Boisset far exceeded that. He created a shop that you

can't even find in Paris.

Along with the JCB wines, he sells luxury table furnishings and home decorations, jewelry and food.

Let's take each separately:

JCB Tasting salon

Boisset created the JCB brand so as not to dilute the historic Raymond, DeLoach and Buena Vista brands he owns; the wines are mostly from Napa and Sonoma, though the bubbles are from Burgundy and one rosé is from Provence.

The JCB sparkling wines are best known here, and Boisset noted that Burgundy has a longer history making sparkling wine, including from top chateaux, but the region decided to focus on still wines in the 19th century and you can't use coveted vineyard names on the bubbly.

He claims that Burgundy is a better place to grow Pinot Noir than in Champagne 250 miles north, for traditionally it is so cool there that they have to use a lot of early ripening but inferior Pinot Meunier, which is not needed in Burgundy.

He's on a crusade to elevate the wines to their former prominence, and demonstrated some exquisite rare, if expensive, examples.

It should be noted that sparkling wines from areas other than Champagne in France (and elsewhere) are growing very rapidly, notably those from Burgundy and Alsace

The still wines are also impressive, though most are also expensive and made in small quantities. Most JCB names carry numbers. No. 3, for

example, is a blend of Burgundian and Russian River Pinots.

Note that some JCB wines are reasonable, too.

Two JCB bubbly and the rosés are only \$25, but they're not featured. They are for sale, however.

Sadly, you can't buy wines by the glass or bottle to drink there, just flights at \$30 and \$50. It would still be a nice place to hang around, perhaps on the leopard-print sofa...

You can always take the wine over to Hurley's, which doesn't charge corkage with meals; maybe they could stock chilled bubbles, whites and rosés to trade for your warm bottle.

Boisset said that he plans to create a winery in Napa Valley to make JCB wines, and he also intends to produce California sparkling wine here. I believe he makes them now at DeLoach.

My guess is that he will have to buy an existing winery that's grandfathered in or build in Napa or other non-ag land south of the city to create the wines he wants from grapes other than Napa, too. If allowed to expand Raymond, he could do it there, too.

I can't do justice to the fancy glassware and jewelry on sale, but I recommend you visit yourself. Some is suitable for gifts for Aunt Margaret, too, not all stratospheric in cost.

Do note the elegant handcuffs, collar and whip, but they're not for sale.

Boisset also has a new JCB lounge at the Ritz in San Francisco as well as at Raymond and DeLoach.

The Atelier by JCB

Though the JCC tasting room would be a destination in itself, the gourmet shop next door surpasses anything else in Napa Valley, and perhaps California, in its offerings, from caviar, foie gras, smoked fish and imported hams to an amazing selection of cheeses. You can try samples of some things, too, and be sure to taste the incendiary mustard sold by the ounce.

Note that one of the products is Napa Pearls caviar (No, the fish aren't from the Napa River, but raised in ponds in the Sacramento Delta).

Many of the offerings are pricey, but not all: Starting soon, they'll be selling sandwiches from \$10 to \$14 (\$29 with Ibérico ham) as well as cheese and charcuterie plates.

I'm getting hungry thinking about it all. But next time I visit, I'm leaving my credit cards behind and taking a fixed amount of cash!

The JCB tasting salon and Atelier are at 6505 Washington St. in Yountville. It's open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Call 934-8237.