

Robb Report

FOOD & DRINK / SPIRITS

Vodka and Gin Made from Grapes? Introducing the New Distillates

Napa Valley and Burgundy vintner Jean-Charles Boisset launches a gin and vodka compendium.

BY CAROLE DIXON ON NOVEMBER 15, 2017



Known for celebrated bubbles and elegant wines, including **the Surrealist** blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot, French-born [Jean-Charles Boisset](#) has 24 wineries and vineyards encompassing thousands of acres in France, Canada, and California under his banner. The bounty includes Buena Vista in Sonoma, the oldest vineyard in California (which was fortunately untouched by the recent fires), DeLoach Vineyards in Santa Rosa, along with a chic tasting room at the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco.

But why stop there? [The Boisset Collection](#) is now producing four spirits distilled from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay produced in Burgundy to create a premium [vodka](#) and [gin](#) (\$125 each), as well as a caviar-infused vodka and a truffle infused vodka (\$150 each), launching in limited release on November 15, 2017. Using only hand-sorted grapes and the purest water from ancient springs in France, the vintners ferment the grapes into wine and slowly distill it seven times into refined, pure spirits. After distillation, only the best lots are selected to become the hand-bottled, single-vintage, small-batch [JCB Spirits](#).

Traditionally not a huge spirits drinker, Boisset has arrived at a pivotal sipping moment with this collection. “I really believe the future will be to be in full control of your ingredients,” he says, “and what’s better than caviar and truffle? Unless you have something so different and unique, why get into that space?” As a self-described caviar fanatic, the caviar-infused vodka was the hardest to produce and subsequently Boisset’s favorite. “I wanted to focus on the inside of the caviar egg rather than the salty, brininess of the ocean.” This was in part to keep the vodka from turning cloudy and to enhance the shelf life of the spirit. He recommends putting the bottle in the freezer and serving straight-up or using a non-melting cube when serving. If caviar is not your passion, the pure vodka is recommended martini style, shaken with a twist.

Boisset also wanted to pursue the challenge of whether grapes could be the choice for distilled spirits of the future—as they are already the base for Cognac—and decided to distill the finest Burgundy grapes of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir to create his new elixirs. “Our goal is to revolutionize the ingredient,” he says. “We are the leader in Burgundy, so why shouldn’t we be the one creating at this level?” he asks. “The moment you distill grapes you get a molecular structure in the mouth that is phenomenal. It’s not a sharp, astringent, or alcoholic vibe, it’s that density and rich palate that allows you to have something so healthy.”



JCB Spirits Caviar-Infused [Vodka](#) Photo: Courtesy JCB Spirits

The [gin](#) was inspired by the dry London style and derived from 44 plants. The juniper is subtle and is blended with everything from cardamom to cinnamon and coriander to chamomile. Boisset believes that gin is the most interesting beverage on the market because it is so complex and evocative. “When you combine the alchemy of the ultimate garden plants and herbs with the guiding principle of juniper you create something that is absolutely ethereal. The herbs, the plants, and energy create something that is electric.”

The hefty bottles for the spirits were styled after similar vessels from the 18th and 19th century and produced by Saverglass. For now, the collection is estate-driven with only 3,600 bottles of each vodka and 2,400 of the gin in production, but Boisset isn’t stopping there. “We’d like to get it up to a comfortable 12,000 to 15,000 bottles of each or about 1,000 cases of each. The revolution has begun.