

## Sonoma and Napa wines in California (continued and ending)

My impressions on the Napa Valley.

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If you are a frequent reader, you were able to read a preview of the [Californian region of Sonoma](#) last week .

But first of all, here is some basic information about the wine region that we will be examining this week.

Many imagine the Napa Valley much larger than it actually is. Yet it is only sixty kilometers long (38 miles) and about eight kilometers wide (5 miles).

It is also often felt that most California wines come from this source. However, the total production of wines from the Napa Valley represents only 4% of California wines.

This is probably due to the fact that it was the first region in the United States to stand out internationally and is the source of this country's most prestigious wine.

Napa Valley wine production is divided into 70% for red wines and 30% for white wines

There are about 500 wineries, 75% of which remain family farms, producing a total of more than 1,000 wine brands. It grows a little more than 18,000 hectares of vines (45,000 acres) and counts 18 [AVA](#) .

The best known consumers are Oakville, Rutherford, Yountville, Mount Veeder and Los Carneros.

The average temperature of the Napa Valley, especially towards the northern part, is significantly higher than that prevailing for the Sonoma coastal region. If the Pinot Noir appreciates the freshness of Sonoma, Cabernet Sauvignon, which demands a longer period of maturation, loves for its part the climate of Napa.

It represents 56% of the grape varieties in the region. For white grape varieties, Chardonnay predominates with 59% for this category.

As for California as a whole, the Napa Valley is more diverse than it seems at first glance. The brief portraits of the 5 wine estates that follow that I had the opportunity to visit will demonstrate this.



[WWW.RAYMONDVINEYARDS.COM](http://WWW.RAYMONDVINEYARDS.COM)

Raymond vineyards owns more than 125 hectares of vineyards in 3 different vineyards: St-Helena, Rutherford and Jameson Canyon.

Long-term supply contracts with some 15 other producers allow this house to benefit from the various micro-climates and sub-appellations of the Napa Valley.

After his arrival in the Napa Valley in 1933, Roy Raymond married Martha Jane Beringer in 1936. He worked for 35 years for the famous producer Beringer. In 1970, he decided to build his own estate from scratch, with the help of his two sons, Walter and Roy jr. Their first harvest took place in 1974. Since 2009, the estate is part of the Boisset group, whose president is Jean-Charles Boisset and whom I met during my visit.

There is no denying that in addition to knowing well the wine, Mr. Boisset has the sense of marketing. It brings to California a different, even more fragmented approach.

Thus, at Raymond vineyards, visitors are offered the opportunity to taste the wines of the house in different atmospheres. Among others, the *Red Room* is all draped in red velvet, or the *Crystal Cellar* where a giant chandelier stands, as well as stainless steel tanks reflecting multiple and vibrant colors.

But all this would be meaningless if the quality of the wines was not up to par. Let's see.



**Sauvignon Blanc 2016, Lot No 4, R Collection, \$ 13 (US)**

*As a welcome, we were welcomed with this fresh and crunchy Sauvignon Blanc wine from the vineyards of Lodi and Lake county; flavors of melon, lemon and mango; high in stainless steel tank; a very satisfactory entry-level wine; not available in Quebec.*

**Chardonnay 2016, Family Classic , \$ 18 (US)**

*Originating from a blend of different appellations of the region, this wine is a model of balance; only a small part of the production was matured in oak barrels and underwent malolactic fermentation; light golden yellow color and white flower effluvia, light honey with a vanilla tip; well preserved acidity delivering a clean and pleasant finish; not available in Quebec.*

**Cabernet Sauvignon 2016, Family Classic , \$ 18 (US) ([\\$ 18.75 in Quebec, vintage 2014](#))**

*Here is a very good value for money to take note; I had spoken [of this wine in April](#) ; from three different appellations in California; the vintage 2016 contains 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Petit Verdot, 3% Petite Syrah and 2% Merlot; purplish ruby color; aromas of raspberry, blackberry, blackcurrant and tobacco; already accessible but able to evolve 3-4 years at least.*

### **Cabernet Sauvignon 2014, Reserve Selection, \$ 50 (US)**

*The last vintage of this wine in Quebec was 2012 (\$ 41.75); watch for the arrival of the 2014 commemorating the 40th vintage of the house; the raw material comes from St. Helena and Rutherford and from nearby producers; after a long maceration, the wine is aged for 19 months in French oak barrels, new at 30%; the result is a rich wine, both fine and silky; good for the next 7-8 years.*

Note: The Canadian market will receive this wine with the label shown on the first bottle on the left in the photo above. Starting with the 2015 vintage, the label of this wine will be in red velvet, as the bottle on the right of the picture below.



### **Generations 2014, Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, \$ 120 (US)**

The last vintage of this wine in Quebec [was 2010](#) ; its price was 130 \$

*This wine, the high end of the house, comes from the vineyards of St. Helena and Oakville; this vintage consists solely of Cabernet Sauvignon; it was bred 19 months in new French oak barrels of high quality; her dress is dark ruby with purple reflections; its delicate bouquet consists of raspberry, blackcurrant, black cherry with a touch of chocolate; the mouth follows, silky and very long; the tannins are already quite melted; to wait a few years; nothing presses because it will last 10-12 years at least.*