

Scottish Field®

California Part 2: Critters in the vineyard

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'Theatre of nature'

Nowhere was the link between wildlife and wine made clearer than at Raymond Vineyards' Rutherford site in the Napa Valley, where head gardener Joe Papendick has created a "theatre of nature" to extoll the benefits of working in harmony with the environment.

Papendick guides guests along a path through his demonstration garden, explaining how biodynamic winemaking begins with creating compost that will nourish the vines.

As well as the chickens, goats and peacocks in the garden, there are more boxes for barn owls and little brown bat colonies – while Frederick the ginger cat patrols the paths in search of "varmint".



Inside the winery at Raymond, there's "wild life" of a different kind.

The site is owned by Boisset Family Estates, the company run by colourful Frenchman Jean-Charles Boisset, often known as "JCB" and certainly not to be confused with a large yellow digger.

The winery is split into a series of "rooms" that guests can visit, including the velvet-lined "red room" for tastings, the "crystal cellar" in which burlesque-clad manikins cavort from trapezes under chandeliers and a stuffed lion stands guard between the stainless-steel

tanks, and a new cabaret-style bar, in which JCB himself revealed details of "Haute Couture", a new blend of crémants or sparkling wines from around France.

Among his Californian wines, the **2013 Raymond Vineyards Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon (£72.10, Hedonism Wines)** hit the spot with aromas of blackberries, chocolate and coffee, leading into red fruit on the palate and a rounded mouthfeel, combined with a full body and long finish.