

ST. HELENA STAR

Appellation tasting held at Raymond

March 03, 2015 By [David Stoneberg](#)



Jean-Charles Boisset, owner of Rutherford's Raymond Vineyards, chats with two guests, JC Courmoyer and Sheila Ash, during the Appellation St. Helena tasting that was held Thursday, Feb. 26, at Raymond Winery.

Many of the 70 members of Appellation St. Helena poured their wines for the trade, retailers and wholesalers on Thursday, Feb. 26, during the Premiere Napa Valley event, sponsored by the Napa Valley Vintners.

For Jean-Charles Boisset, owner of Raymond Vineyards, who hosted the gathering for the second year in a row, it was “energizing, electric and very magnetic” to see wineries from St. Helena and Rutherford getting together to show off their terroir, which Boisset calls “amazing.”

“What we need to think about is where I come from, which is Burgundy, thousands of years ago, before we had 750 different vineyard designates and appellations, we had one. So today, I really feel we are on the eve of a great appellation, sub-appellation and great vineyard designates (in the St. Helena appellation) and really understanding the differences and complexities of what St. Helena has to offer,” Boisset said.

He added that it is "exciting" to see the "passion and contagious emotion for fine wine" exhibited at the ASH tasting. "I'm very thrilled to see so many passionate people promoting wine, talking about wine and inviting people into the world of wine," Boisset said. "This is just one community to partake into the passion of food, wine, art and culture. This is what we celebrate today."

Dave Yewell, ASH president, said they had 250 people preregister for the tasting, but added, "We've had a lot more than that show up today." He said the afternoon tasting was going really well. "We've taken better advantage of the space here at Raymond, we've got more walking-around room than last year and more glasses. Every year, it gets a little bit better," he added.

He said with 20 of the 225 special Premiere Napa Valley wines being poured at the ASH tasting, "the trade is getting a great opportunity to know what to bid on." The Premiere Napa Valley wine futures auction was held Saturday, Feb. 21. It broke records, raising \$6.048 million to support the various missions of the Napa Valley Vintners.

Yewell said 70 wineries and grapegrowers are members of ASH. When asked what makes St. Helena's terroir so special, he replied, "We're the hourglass of St. Helena. Right about at Deer Park, the Napa Valley is really narrow. The hourglass effect changes the climate to be a little more moderate than up north in Calistoga or warmer than the big cooling impact of the bay," Yewell said.

He said the terroir is good for growing not only cabernet sauvignon, but also sauvignon blanc and petite sirah. "It's a lucky combination of soil and sun and wind and rain," he added.

Fulton Mather, owner of David Fulton Winery, was pouring two petite sirah wines from the 2012 vintage at the event. Both are 100 percent petite sirah, and one was fortified. "We do very well with both of these wines," Mather said, "2012 is turning out way better than we thought."

David Fulton, Mather's ancestor, founded the winery and grew grapes on the St. Helena property, beginning Jan. 12, 1860. The family continued the business until 1890. In 1995 Fulton Mather took control of the Fulton Lane property.

"When it was my turn I decided to restore the winery and bring back winemaking to our family," he said. "I'm very proud. I know my grandparents and my father are happy to see what we've done with this piece of property."

The Mathers will continue to make wine as Fulton's son, Richard, has taken over as winemaker. At first, neighbors Allen Price and Randall Johnson were helping the Mathers with their wines, but today Richard "has come into the fold under their guidance and now is doing a great job. We're very proud of him," Mather said.