

INDUSTRY NEWS

Raymond Vineyards Hosts 7th Annual Sommelier Selection Blending Session

Raymond Vineyards Proprietor Jean-Charles Boisset, Director of Winemaking Stephanie Putnam and Assistant Winemaker Thane Knutson recently hosted ten hand-selected sommeliers from across the country to participate in the seventh annual Sommelier Selection Blending Session. Each sommelier was selected for their depth of knowledge and experience, and together they represent some of the best and brightest sommelier talent in the nation.



To create the 2014 Sommelier Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, the group was paired into teams of two and asked to craft a one-of-a-kind Cabernet Sauvignon, blended from the finest quality grapes in Napa, Sonoma and Lake Counties. Each blend was blind tasted and ranked among the sommeliers until they determined their favorite, revealing the winning combination. The winning 2014 Sommelier Selection blend is a delicious wine that seamlessly combines the three appellations into a food-friendly, approachable, flavorful wine and will ultimately be released in May 2016 as the 2014 Sommelier Selection Cabernet Sauvignon.

The participants for the 2014 vintage featured an all-star cast that spanned the country. The esteemed panel of sommeliers included: Nico Snyman (Robuchon, Las Vegas, NV), Todd Lipman (Bistro du Midi, Boston, MA), Yannick Benjamin (The University Club, NYC), Gregory Mayer (Bern's Steakhouse, Tampa, FL), Ashley Ceraolo (California Pizza Kitchen, Orange County, CA), Todd Rushing, (Concentrics Restaurant Group, Atlanta, GA), Noel Petrin (Cru Wine Bar, Dallas, TX), Jeffrey Mayfield (Del Frisco's Steakhouse, Philadelphia, PA), Jamie Harding (Cavallo Point, San Francisco, CA), Danielle Kuzinich (Hidden Vine, San Francisco, CA).

Yannick Benjamin, also known for Esquire's *Uncorked* said, "It was an honor to have been chosen for Raymond Vineyard's Sommelier Selection annual blending and also be part of such a talented group of sommeliers. I was inspired by the passion of Jean-Charles Boisset and the brilliant Stephanie Putnam, as both were extremely generous in sharing their knowledge with the group. It was so exciting to be part of creating a wine that I know in a few years I can taste and look back on and remember how I was part of that special group. A truly great wine can bring a sense of nostalgia to any wine drinking experience and I know that every time I taste the 2014 Sommelier Selection, I will always be reminded by the unforgettable experience I had with the team at Raymond Vineyards.

Speaking of the experience, Jean-Charles Boisset said, "It was such a pleasure to host these incredibly talented sommeliers here at Raymond Vineyards. Each one added their enthusiasm, energy, personality and charisma to the wine that will become our 2014 Sommelier Selection Cabernet Sauvignon. We can't wait to share this beautiful elixir with the patrons of the best restaurants in the world that these sommeliers have the pleasure to represent. Winemaking is truly magical and to share in this creative experience with this talented group of sommeliers was an incredible moment and shared memory."

The first annual Sommelier Selection blending experience, in 2008, inspired the creation of Raymond Vineyards' Winemaker for a Day program which has become one of the most popular guest experiences at Raymond Vineyards where visitors learn how to blend Bordeaux varietals from Napa Valley's appellations to create their own ideal wine. The 2014 Sommelier Selection Cabernet Sauvignon will be exclusively available in restaurants nationwide and will retail for approximately \$50 a bottle or \$12 to \$15 by-the-glass.