

Form Meets Function

CASA OBSIDIANA'S EARLY SUCCESS OPENS NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

by Alissa Bica Raines

WHEN JEAN-CHARLES BOISSET, a Franco-American vintner who owns wineries in both France and California, partnered with eighth-generation agave growers Jorge and Roberto Beckmann Gonzalez, they had high hopes for their tequila, Casa Obsidiana: They knew that the combination of high-quality estate-grown Blue Weber agave from volcanic soils at the base of El Volcán de Tequila—where the brand's namesake obsidian stones are found in abundance—with aging in French oak barrels previously used for Boisset's Napa Valley Chardonnays would make for a special spirit. Their optimism was well founded, as aficionados across the country are embracing the brand.

After Casa Obsidiana soft-launched in Napa Valley in December 2023 at the opening of Calistoga Depot—a historic train station turned lively dining and drinking destination in downtown Calistoga—it made its official debut in Northern California the following March with three expressions: a Blanco, Reposado, and Añejo. According to Patrick Egan, senior vice president of marketing and communications at Boisset's company, Boisset Collection, the focus wasn't on mass sales but rather on the legacy of the Beckmann Gonzalez family as well as on modern Mexican culture—in other words, on the intersection of the country's traditions, contemporary customs, and future. "Our vision was not to go after cases but to



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go after places that would speak to that story," Egan says, referring to their account strategy.

The aim was to gain placements in more than just cocktail bars; in fact, the MICHELIN-starred PRESS Restaurant in Napa was the brand's first account, and by mid-2024, it had a home at approximately 100 high-end establishments in Northern California. Early competition wins and strong reviews—including a gold medal at the 2024 USA Spirits Ratings competition and 96- to 98-point scores from The Tasting Panel—put Casa Obsidiana on the radar of even more beverage

professionals, who were drawn to the tequilas' agave-forward flavors, elevated and smoothed by their time in the Chardonnay casks, which lend more delicate oak flavors than traditional charred Bourbon barrels. (Even the Blanco is aged for 16 days in oak, creating a plata with added texture, while the Reposado and Añejo rest for four and 15 months, respectively.) They also appreciated the brand's family ownership and the beauty of the artistic packaging.

Casa Obsidiana's bottles are unique in that each expression has a different shape, color, and backstory. The white

The Beckmann Gonzalez estate is located at the base of El Volcán de Tequila in Mexico.



Casa Obsidiana co-founders Jean-Charles Boisset (center) with his partners, Roberto and Jorge Beckmann Gonzalez.

Blanco bottle, when turned upside down, looks like a piña sprouting out of the earth; the angular edges at the top are fashioned after cuts made by the coa de jima, a traditional agave-hewing tool with a long handle and a circular, razor-sharp blade at the end. The Reposado bottle is green to represent the color of Blue Weber agave leaves, and its shape is inspired by the fluidity of water—notable because the tequila’s water source is a spring that

flows from the base of the volcano on the Beckmann Gonzalez family’s estate underground to the distillery. “We call this bottle the Picasso,” Egan says. “It reminded us of the shape of a woman as Pablo Picasso would have designed one, combined with the grace of the flow of water.” Finally, the red color of the Añejo bottle represents the property’s iron-rich volcanic earth and, through its Cubist shape, tells the story of modern Mexican

architecture, with its strong, angular lines. (Admittedly, the standout packaging can be a blessing and curse. “We’ve seen some journalists and bartenders question the integrity of the product at first glance, saying, ‘With that fancy bottle, this must be all marketing,’” Egan points out. “Then they taste it and hear the story and go, ‘Wow. No, this is serious.’”)

In September 2024, Casa Obsidiana expanded outside of California—first to Texas, where it’s available at the Mirador Dallas among other locations, and then to Oklahoma, where it formed a partnership with the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa. There, the tequila launched at an auction to create excitement and energy around the brand before it moved into local hotels and restaurants. Each new success has helped to grow its momentum, and this year to date, Casa Obsidiana has entered Florida, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Nevada, and Delaware as well as Washington, D.C.; while accounts are approximately 80% on-premise, the brand also sells direct to consumers on its website and can also be found at select Total Wine & More, K&L, Pavillions and BevMo! locations.

The Beckmann Gonzalez brothers advocate for tequila as an accompaniment to a meal: Begin with the Blanco, have the Reposado with an entree, and pair the Añejo with dessert or an after-dinner cigar. This also creates sales opportunities for on-premise accounts, which can serve flights of the three expressions; restaurants doing just that include Bourbon Steak Los Angeles, Bar Sprezzatura in San Francisco, and Santi in New York City. (The Casa Obsidiana team recommends presenting the flights on a board made from staves of the same barrels used for the aging process.) But whether due to its approachability with food, its unique flavors derived from aging in wine barrels, its beautiful design, or the fact that it’s made by a local family in the age of corporate tequila brands—or a combination of the four—Casa Obsidiana has clearly found a lasting place in the market. *sj*