



SELLING ITSELF:

BUENA VISTA WINERY

Founded in Sonoma in 1857—long before the region was a world-renowned wine powerhouse—Buena Vista Winery merits recognition for its longevity. But California’s first premium winery isn’t coasting on its impressive history: It embarked on an exciting new chapter in 2011, when it was acquired by Boisset Collection. Under Boisset’s leadership, not only were its historic cellars renovated but its retail sales soared to new heights.

Today, “approximately 78% of our sales originate from retail channels, underscoring the significant market presence we enjoy in traditional brick-and-mortar outlets,” says senior vice president of sales Ken Hoernlein, who adds that “our retail strategy [has typically] focused on establishing a presence in independent stores, allowing us to cultivate brand recognition and build momentum. As our brand gains traction and experiences substantial growth, we are strategically expanding our reach by venturing into larger retail accounts and entering new markets.”

Take Chateau Buena Vista Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon as an example. Amid the “notable shift in consumer behavior” during the

pandemic, Hoernlein explains, the wine “emerg[ed] as a preferred choice for at-home consumption.” He believes trade and consumers alike have been captivated by its “universal charm,” which he attributes to the complex yet velvety and supple style achieved by winemaker Brian Maloney. “Notably, it has gained favor among the Asian communities in New York and the vibrant Latin communities in South Florida,” he adds, “[but] its success extends beyond niche markets, seamlessly integrating into the shelves of traditional grocery stores.”

Meanwhile, online sales have also contributed to Buena Vista’s upward retail trajectory: Hoernlein says that among e-retailers, “our product stands out as one of their top-performing wines. This dual triumph in both physical and virtual market spaces attests to the broad appeal and consumer recognition that our brand commands, reinforcing our position as a preferred choice for a diverse array of customers.”

While that’s reason enough for any retailer to carry Buena Vista, the fact that the winery has managed to lighten the load for its off-premise partners



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOISSET COLLECTION

has only enhanced its attractiveness. “Our strategic decision to package the wine in convenient six-pack shippers has proven instrumental in securing a strong foothold in the independent retail market,” Hoernlein asserts. “This packaging choice streamlines the purchasing process for independent retailers, offering them a hassle-free and accessible option. Furthermore, the compact size of this pack aligns with the display footprint of larger retailers.”

The ever-evolving retail scene can stymie progress for the best of brands. Buena Vista nimbly navigates these complex dynamics by making wine that consumers crave and minimizing stress for retailers—no wonder it practically sells itself! —Wanda Mann