

The Culinary Scoop

by Cuisine Noir Magazine

Jean-Charles Boisset Introduces Napa Valley's First Wine History Museum and Tasting Salon: 1881 Napa



1881 Napa, Napa Valley's first wine history museum and tasting salon, is now open. Jean-Charles Boisset, proprietor of Boisset Collection, has created an homage to Napa Valley, with a tasting room that showcases wines from Napa Valley's distinct sub-appellations, a museum where guests can explore Napa's rich wine history, an extensive collection of historic wine relics from Europe and the United States and original artifacts from the Early California Wine Trade Archive. 1881 Napa is located in a historic Victorian home built in 1874 next to Oakville Grocery (founded in 1881) in Oakville, California, both of which were purchased by Boisset Collection at the beginning of the year.

"Napa Valley has a powerful place in American wine history and 1881 Napa puts the region in perspective on the world stage," said Boisset, who grew up in Burgundy, France imbued with a passion for wine and learning as the son of vintners and the grandson of educators. "An extraordinary amount has been accomplished in this enclave in a short amount of time and we want to create a destination that celebrates Napa's long history and its pioneering founders while exploring Napa's incredibly diverse *terroir* in one destination."



The gateway to Napa Valley, 1881 Napa is a must-stop for wine enthusiasts, providing guests the opportunity to discover Napa Valley's AVAs for the first time, or to explore some of their favorite appellations more deeply. Napa Valley was the first AVA designated in California in 1981 and within the region are 16 sub-AVAs that contain more geological diversity than any other wine region, leading to dramatically different wines within Napa Valley.

Located in a building more than 140 years old that was reimagined by renowned architect Howard Backen, 1881 Napa is next door to Oakville Grocery, the oldest continually operating grocery store in California. The two centerpiece of the space — a 48-light Baccarat crystal Zenith chandelier and a reproduction of an 1895 map of Napa County on canvas hanging from the ceiling — provide a dramatic environment to explore the varied wines of the valley, while displays highlighting the unique stories and soils of each appellation surround the tasting room.

The wine museum in 1881 Napa is open to the public with complimentary visitation. A self-guided tour up to and along the museum's second-floor mezzanine tells the history of Napa Valley, introduces the founders and influential early pioneers of the region and presents a robust collection of wine ephemera, including historic winemaking, vineyard, nursery and cooperage as well as displays curated and organized by the Early California Wine Trade Museum featuring local historic wine artifacts from the collections of Dean Walters and John O'Neill. From the mezzanine, guests have an open view to the tasting room below.



Alcoves hold soil samples from the various regions, along with 1881 Napa wines and descriptions of the appellations written by best-selling and award-winning author of *The Wine Bible* and wine expert Karen MacNeil. MacNeil also helped develop the various tasting options, which include comparative flights such as “Majestic Mountains Versus Plush Valley” and “Is it Cool to be Hot or Hot to be Cool?” as well as an option to “Embark on a Journey Throughout the Valley” by tasting Cabernet Sauvignons from 12 different sub-AVAs. In addition to the site-specific Cabs, guests can enjoy wines from a blend of Napa Valley grapes, including a sparkling wine, Sauvignon Blanc, rosé, Chardonnay, red blend, Merlot and a Cabernet Sauvignon — all wines crafted exclusively for 1881 Napa by Winemaker Thane Knutson to reflect the diversity of Napa Valley. After sampling the broad range of Napa Valley styles, guests can discover which AVAs they like the most and purchase wines from 1881 Napa as well Oakville Grocery.

1881 Napa is located at 7856 St. Helena Highway in Oakville and is open daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Reservations are recommended and can be made [here](#).