

FOOD & WINE

1881 Napa Is the Valley's 'First Wine History Museum and Tasting Salon'



The Napa Valley has had vineyards dating back to the 19th century and is one of America's oldest AVAs, established back in 1981. Not that you go to Napa for the history; you go to drink the wine. But if you want to learn about the history – while drinking the wine, of course – Jean-Charles Boisset, the French-born wine mogul behind the Boisset Collection, has opened what's being billed as the Napa Valley's "first wine history museum and tasting salon."

1881 Napa – as the new destination in Oakville, California, is called – seeks to be a one-stop shop for everything Napa wine. Located in a Victorian home from 1874 next to the famed Oakville Grocery (established 1881), 1881 Napa features "a tasting room that showcases wines from Napa Valley's distinct sub-appellations, a museum where guests can explore Napa 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," according to the announcement.

"Napa Valley has a powerful place in American wine history and 1881 Napa puts the region in perspective on the world stage," Boisset explained. "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 self-guided museum section is free and open to the public, explaining the region's history and the people behind it while leading guests up to the second-floor mezzanine and leaving them with a jealousy-inducing open view of the tasting room below.



Speaking of which, if you'd rather learn about wine than history, 1881 Napa promises to offer that, too, with wines produced and bottled specifically for the experience. "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," the announcement states. "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." Once you've got your preferences down pat, you can buy wines from both 1881 Napa or Oakville Grocery.

1881 Napa is open daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. They say reservations, however, are recommended.