

Finding a Balance

Boisset Family Estates works to put a modern face on the wine industry in the US.

By Jennifer Cirillo

With French roots that date back to 1961, Boisset Family Estates has a modern take on today's wine business.

Recognized for its packaging innovations—premium wines in Tetra Pak, PET and screw cap aluminum bottles—Boisset Family Estates also has helped set the pace for a modern and sustainable way of growing grapes with its focus on organic and biodynamic viticulture.

Beverage World caught up with Jean-Charles Boisset, president of Burgundy, France-based Boisset Family Estates, while he was at Raymond Vineyards in California's Napa Valley to discuss some of the latest endeavors from the family-owned wine producer and importer.

Raymond Vineyards: Boisset Family Estates purchased Raymond Vineyards in August 2009. Raymond sits on 300-plus acres and this year began implementing organic farming methods in pursuit of achieving organic certification and eventually biodynamic certification, a hallmark of Boisset properties worldwide. In other words: vineyards that avoid fertilizers and pesticides by maintaining a balanced, diverse ecology.

With that, the focus at Raymond is to engage visitors with nature, Boisset says, while providing an atmosphere for education to learn about the relationship between wine, as a finished product, and its origins, in this case, Napa Valley. This fall, the vineyard introduced new indoor and outdoor guest experiences, one of which is called

Theater of Nature, explaining Raymond's natural winegrowing approach through a host of plant and animal life.

New Introductions: Earlier this year from Raymond, three new wines were launched: R Collection Field Blend; Family Classic, a retail exclusive Cabernet Sauvignon, and Sommelier Selection, a Cabernet Sauvignon available solely for restaurant by-the-glass programs created by a group of prominent sommeliers.

The R Collection Field Blend, which

retails for about \$14.99, is in response to a growing trend in the wine industry: red wine blends. According to AC Nielsen data, domestic and imported red wine blends represent 6 percent of the table wine category in the US and are growing at five times the rate of the total category.

"American people, as well as consumers around the world, have been intrigued about varietals to really first learn about wine. So, the blend is the ultimate level of composing artistically the synergies between each of those wines and what they bring to one another in one bottle of wine," says Boisset.

The blend combines seven varietals, the core five being Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Zinfandel.

Packaging Innovation: Boisset Family Estates is in the midst of releasing California Rabbit, a brand extension of French Rabbit. California Rabbit

« **TWO OF THE** new wine introductions from Boisset Family Estates are California Rabbit, a brand extension of French Rabbit, and R Collection Field Blend.



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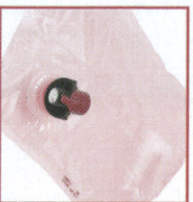
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is being offered in 500 ml tetra pak containers and in light weight glass bottles, a 30 percent weight reduction. "It's the first time we are doing a California endeavor that way," says Boisset of the packaging.

In the on-premise, the second generation of the Barrel to Barrel Program is being released. The 10-liter oak barrel wine dispenser is designed to optimize a retailer's bottle-to-glass pours while reducing their carbon footprint. There are 700 restaurants participating in the program and 900 more barrels are arriving from France, Boisset says. **[BW]**

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