Gina Gallo & Jean-Charles Boisset
Powerhouse Wine Couple Brings Their Wine Dynasty to NH Wine Week

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Après Ski in Style with 5 Great Recipes
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A Wine Dynasty Comes to New Hampshire

Gina Gallo and Jean-Charles Boisset on Honoring the History, Passion and Discovery of Wine

She was raised as part of a renowned winemaking family in California. He was brought up in a wine empire in Burgundy. So when Gina Gallo and Jean-Charles Boisset married in 2009, they instantly became a wine industry power-couple with influence and reach that spans the globe.

When they travel to the Granite State later this month, the couple will offer insight into that unmatched heritage, expertise and perspective. The duo will be in the spotlight during New Hampshire Wine Week’s Cellar Notes event at the Puritan Conference Center, “Wine Dynasties: The Boisset & Gallo Families.”

Guests at this limited event can also expect an evening of stories, conversation, bottle signings, photo opportunities and delicious hors d’oeuvres. Wine insiders know that it’s rare for Gallo and Boisset to appear together in a setting such as this – an intimate event with the opportunity for attendees to meet with and learn from two of the industry’s leading winemakers.

During their time in New Hampshire, both at the Cellar Notes event and at the Winter Wine Spectacular, Gallo is most looking forward to meeting people and learning about what wine means to them. “I want to hear how people came to enjoy wine, the traditions they hold within their families and the stories they most want to tell,” she says. “I want us to enjoy a glass of wine together and toast to the New Year and new beginnings in a land that is steeped in wonderful history.” Boisset hopes people come away with a new insight into the essence of wine. “Wine is passion, wine is senses, wine is emotion and wine unites,” he says.

When it comes to the art of winemaking, both Gallo and Boisset are ideal teachers with lifetimes of experience to share. Gallo is senior director of winemaking at E. & J. Gallo Winery and granddaughter of co-founder Julio Gallo. Boisset is proprietor of the Boisset Collection, which operates 25 wineries in California, France and Canada. Both individually and as a couple the two have made an indelible mark on the wine world. Nearly a year ago, in an unusual move, the Collins College of Hospitality Management awarded the Robert Mondavi Wine & Food Award to both Gallo and Boisset – breaking with tradition by honoring them together.

The two don’t typically collaborate when it comes to producing wine, but the way they work in concert as wine ambassadors – complementing one another in many ways – makes this powerhouse couple utterly unique in the industry. Boisset is the impeccably-dressed storyteller, showing the world why wine, like life, is to be embraced and experienced. Gallo may not be as outwardly loquacious, but her words carry weight – as illustrated by the respect afforded both her and the business she’s helped steer to new heights. In April, she accepted the 2018 Vinitaly International Award in Verona – quite near the northern Italy origins of the Gallo family. This prestigious award recognizes companies and outstanding personalities who are distinguished for their work in the international wine world.

Though Gallo says she was both touched and humbled to receive the award, the connection to family and heritage was also incredibly special. “We could feel the footsteps of our family’s history and wine’s cultural history coming together as one,” she says. Adding to that sense of family legacy was the auspicious timing: “My grandfather Julio and great uncle Ernest began their wine journey in 1933, so we received the award just as we were celebrating our 85th anniversary,” Gallo explains.

Family – honoring your history and laying the path for the future – is integral to how Gallo and Boisset approach both life and winemaking. Though the couple began their lives countries apart, they were each raised in close-knit families that valued hard work, commitment, a passion for wine and a
deep respect for the land. Today, they strive to instill in their own daughters the values they learned as children.

Growing up, Gallo and her siblings helped their father and grandfather harvest fresh fruit and vegetables from their garden, enjoying the bounty together at family meals, a tradition Gallo maintains. “We teach our daughters about the importance of the land, in how we need to carefully tend the land and our garden so it can give back to us its bounty of fresh, flavorful foods for our table,” she says. “It’s passing along the lessons that began my love of the land.”

In France, Boisset’s grandmother imparted similar lessons. “From a very young age, my grandmother taught me the fundamental principles that guide me to this day – to think of the source, to respect Mother Nature, and to live in harmony with the beings and lives that surround us,” he says.

Today, the Boisset family’s estates are certified biodynamic and/or organic, with an eye toward teaching others about the importance of sustainability. At Raymond Vineyards in Napa Valley, for example, they created the Theatre of Nature, an organic and biodynamic demonstration garden. “Wine is the most luxurious product from nature, and the most able to express the soul of Mother Nature,” says Boisset. “The wine industry should become the ultimate leader in understanding and appreciating that quality, and our survival as vintners depends on how much we care about the world around us.”

The couple share a powerful commitment to the lands they love and to which they owe their success – both in the US and in France – and this commitment has deep roots.

“Sustainability at Gallo began when E. & J. Gallo Winery began, with my grandfather and great uncle and their steadfast dedication to the land,” says Gallo. “We are a generational business. The future of our family winery depends on a healthy environment. Sustainability is the best approach to ensure that we protect our land for future generations, improve quality of life for our employees and enhance our communities.”

At E. & J. Gallo, for every acre of land planted to vineyards, an acre is set aside to protect and enhance wildlife. “I truly believe if there is a single priority that calls to all of us in wine, it’s that we continue to implement sustainable practices in all aspects of winemaking, grape growing and in our communities,” she says. “Sustainability is the most important legacy that we can leave for our next generation.”

Boisset says that legacy extends to the heart and soul of humanity. For him, ensuring that the art of crafting wine lives on is about much more than producing something that tastes delicious – wine, he says, is a vehicle for creativity and knowledge. “Wine is a catalyst. It sparks emotions and dreams, and is the center of a well-lived life; from wine, you discover history, terroir, Mother Nature, passion, foreign cultures, and ultimately and most importantly, you discover yourself.”

For Gallo, the idea of sharing a sense of place through wine is key as well. With the always impeccably dressed Boisset was voted Best Dressed in a Nob Hill Gazette 2014 reader’s poll.

Gallo Estate and Gallo Signature Series wines, her goal is “to interpret our vineyards through each unique vintage by telling the story of those special places. I look for each of these wines to be what I consider the pinnacle of varietal expression specific to the renowned vineyard sites where they were grown. I believe that a good vineyard, when planted to the right varietal and tended carefully and thoughtfully, finds its own balance. Each of these wines is made in small lots from certain blocks, rows or sometimes even specific vines.”

When it comes to wines produced on
a larger scale, those ideals are in no way sacrificed. “It’s still all about finding the best grapes possible for that wine,” says Gallo. “It’s still a story of the place. It’s about finding sites that complement and enhance each other so, when it comes time to blend, it’s harmonious. Our consumer expects consistency year in and year out, this is where the art of blending plays a strong role.”

Boisset describes wine as simply “the most exciting elixir on Earth.” It’s all about the joy of sharing, he says, and not merely the literal act of sharing a bottle. For a winemaker, it’s about sharing a part of yourself. “Wine is not a recipe; it is a yearly passionate expression of who we are. Wine is a canvas upon which we create, and yet, which shapes us.” Just as each wine represents its place and its year, the

“Sustainability is the most important legacy that we can leave for our next generation.”

winemaker shepherds and guides it to express itself, he explains. “So wine allows us to be conduits of Mother Nature. It is our vehicle to express ourselves, guided by nature, and also our muse for enhancing creativity, sparking dreams and igniting passion.”

The idea of constant creation – that each year, each harvest brings something new – also inspires Gallo. “Every year, I find there is something new to be discovered or explored,” she says. “There is no end to this story. Wines have enchanted winemakers for centuries. For thousands of years, we’ve all set out to make a perfect wine. Yet I don’t feel the perfect wine exists. There’s always something that can be better,” she says, and that’s what makes the work exciting. “What will this vintage present to us? What will the land give us? How can we capture that beauty and translate it into a wine? What innovations can we bring? There is still so much to be discovered about wine,” says Gallo.

Lucky Cellar Notes attendees are invited to join Gallo and Boisset on a journey of discovery that welcomes both long-time wine lovers and those new to its joys. After all, says Gallo, even with her experience she’s still learning. “When I was young, I worried about all the things I didn’t know about winemaking,” she says. “Now I am thrilled that there are so many things to be discovered.”

On select Saturdays, area chefs explore a variety of new and creative options for pairing wine, spirits and food. Held in the state-of-the-art kitchen of the New Hampshire Liquor and Wine Outlet, 25 Coliseum Avenue, Nashua. Visit LiquorandWineOutlets.com/mix for dates and times.