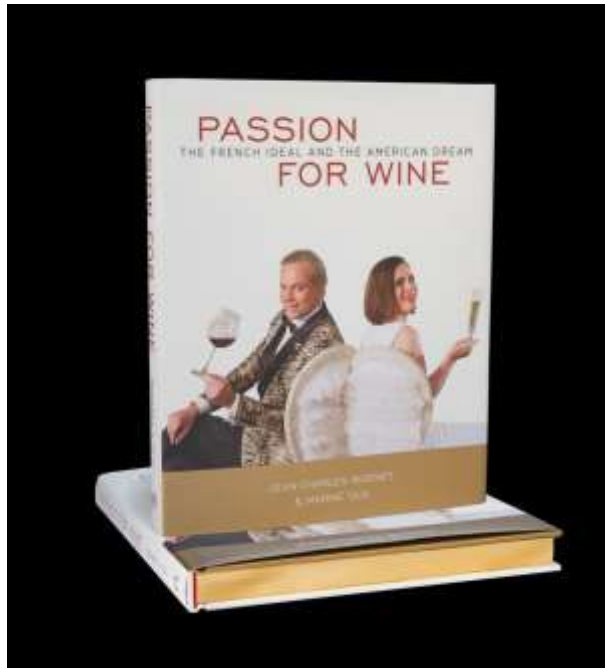


Napa Valley *Register*

New Napa Valley book creates a “Passion for Wine”

Jessica Zimmer For The Weekly Calistogan · Oct 16, 2018 Updated 3 hrs ago



Whimsical, educational, and easy to read, “Passion for Wine” is a new book on wine basics for sommeliers, wine drinkers, and winemakers, by vintner Jean-Charles Boisset and sommelier Marnie Old.

“We’ve made ‘Passion’ approachable, appealing, and concise. You can read about organic farming or how to make sparkling wine in two pages. Yet the book is good for winemakers also. I use the book as a reference a great deal,” said Boisset, who is president of Boisset Family Estates and owner of JCB Tasting Salon in Yountville.

“Passion” guides the reader through the winemaking process, the fundamentals of wine tasting, the noble grape varieties, and sources of wine’s diversity. The book contains easy-to-read graphics and short yet thoughtful explanations of concepts like ‘terroir’ and the ripening process.

The book begins with an introduction to wine history, emphasizing France's role in winemaking and how French wines rose to prominence. The book also includes a good amount of information about American viewpoints on the winemaking process and California wine.

"Passion's" guide to Zinfandel introduces it as "the historic red grape of California," often sourced "from plots of so-called 'old vines' that were planted before California's fine wine boom in the 1960s." The discussion includes a graphic explaining why old vines can improve wine quality: They have "multi-faceted flavors that display more maturity and personality."

The book also highlights some of the vineyards and practices in Boisset's own wineries, including Raymond Vineyards in St. Helena and Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma.

Boisset's parents, Jean-Claude and Claudine Boisset, founded the family's first winery in Burgundy, France, in 1961. Today, the Boisset Collection operates 24 wineries in California, France, and Canada, including Lyeth Estates in St. Helena and Domaine de la Vougeraie in France.

Boisset said he had the idea for the book 20 years ago. He has been working on it for the past four years.

"Many wine books are encyclopedic, comprehensive 'wine bibles.' I wanted to write a wine book that was democratic, easy, and unassuming. My life is wine. I talk about wine 16 hours a day. It was somewhat easy for me to do because I know what questions I get asked all the time," said Boisset.

One of the most practical chapters is "The Art of Wine Living," which focuses on entertaining with wine, dining with wine, and matching wine and food. Boisset said this chapter is really about the American way of seeing wine, with a modern, purposeful eye.

Another helpful section of the book is the appendix, which explains how to read American labels, styled in the modern “varietal” format, and French wine labels, styled in the traditional “regional” format. The American approach emphasizes the wine’s main grape variety as an indicator of the wine’s flavor or style. The French approach names a wine for its region of origin, linking wine quality to regional specificity. The appendix also provides short guides to winemaking regions in France and the U.S., including Sonoma County and Napa Valley.

Boisset injected some of his personal interests into the book by covering topics he holds dear, such as biodynamic farming, a practice that treats the vineyard as a self-contained ecosystem and focuses on sustaining healthy life cycles for all organisms in the vineyard.

Another favorite subject is bubbles. “Passion” contains a whole page on the Champagne method and a short discussion of the Prosecco Method and the Asti Method, the other two ways to make sparkling wine.

The photo spreads are colorful and luxurious. Yet, the book is not Napa or North Bay-centric. Boisset and Old set out to create a general book for the layperson that makes wine tasting and wine drinking very accessible.

One of the most unique traits of “Passion” is its characterization of wines with qualities like those of famous female movie stars, such as voluptuous, like Marilyn Monroe; elegant, like Audrey Hepburn; sensuous, like Sophia Loren; and powerful, like Elizabeth Taylor.

Personifying the wines and describing them with markers like “golden,” “sun-kissed,” “barrel-fermented,” and “splurge-worthy,” for “voluptuous,” helps the reader develop a deep understanding of a wine. The reader can then correlate traits like low acidity and high oak flavor with a wine type, such as high-quality whites.

“We wanted to capture wine’s joie de vivre and help people understand it from their own perspective. Our goal is to instill a little bit of confidence in everyone,” Boisset said.

He also said he and Old worked on the book “at all times everywhere.”

“I really enjoy Buena Vista Winery’s Sonoma Chardonnay, which is light and elegant. I also enjoy DeLoach Vineyards’ Pinot Noir, from Santa Rosa and the Russian River. It’s deep and dark. I like the Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon too. It has that Napa intensity,” said Boisset.

Boisset said he and Old’s collaboration came naturally, and he is now working on a second book by himself.

“It will be called “The Alchemy of Senses.” It’s coming out around mid-December or January. I traveled around 15 cities to promote it. It’s all about your senses. We go very deep into learning about you as a reader. It’s incredibly introspective, interactive, and playful. It’s about celebrating yourself,” said Boisset.

Boisset’s advice for first-time authors is to commit to a project.

“Writing a book is a phenomenal experience. You learn a great deal. You think you know a topic. But until you start writing, you don’t really know. I’m so glad I did it. I recommend it to anyone who has an idea,” Boisset said.