



## INSIDER INTERVIEW WITH DAVID FURER - JEAN-CHARLES BOISSET



by David Furer

With nine French and seven N. American operations, Jean-Charles Boisset has spearheaded his ancestors' Burgundy production into the largest of its kind, while expanding the family's frontiers by moving to California acting as its own US importer, setting a path to acquire existing California wineries and import wines from elsewhere in Europe to the US, and linking with another wine family of note having married Gina Gallo. An advocate and purveyor of biodynamic/organic farming and alternative wine packaging, he's personally one of the wine world's fashionistas often

identified by his red socks. No, he doesn't own the baseball team...yet...though Boisset this March self-published a new book, [Passion for Wine](#), in collaboration with veteran sommelier and educator Marnie Old.

### **What's your earliest memory associated with wine?**

I may shock you but it was when I was three years old walking on barrels in my family's living room in Burgundy, touching the liquid after opening the bungs, tasting them with my little hands, trying Clos Vougeot thinking "oh, this is a great taste." I was reflecting of that recently; I once licked my hand with my mother warning me about falling. I also played hide & seek amongst them, and today I taste with our daughters as I did with my family when I was a child. Playing in the vineyards, my garden I touched and tasted the grapes.

### **Your family business has changed dramatically from when you and your father set up shop in San Francisco many years ago. What expectations that you had then have been achieved?**

When you and I met my father and I were just starting out importing our own wines. My dream was to invest further into the California wine country, thrilled that we could do that, and am thrilled to have achieved that.

### **Curiosity is a source for many inspirations; what piques your attention?**

I'm fortunate to be interested in everything that's creative, so my drives are assisted from the adrenalin of creation. I love to innovate, create, and seeing it through to execution. I believe in acting and doing always what I think of--not just talking about it.

### **Which metrics do you use in determining which projects to develop?**

My level of passion is my metric! I could say PPIs or performance indicators, but I want to drive anything I'm passionate of. I love to succeed, and an important part of this is the numbers, but I do it because I believe and want to create something amazing. It's more than merely from the P&L front.

**Business matters aside, how do you personally approach and express nuances between Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, your native Burgundian grapes, with those in your adopted California home?**

I love both. In my DNA, my blood runs these grapes--no question. I adore both. I'm tempted by all the things we play with--Zinfandel is a great discovery for me and a great way to enjoy California. I'm in love with Cabernet sauvignon thanks to Raymond Vineyards, I adore discovering Petit verdot, Malbec and other varieties. I'm bullish to discover with learning, get very excited and energized by other people. The Bordeaux world is attractive to me, and I love learning from my winemakers in California. I would hate to do the same things all the time. I want to perfect what I discover, to perfect myself.

**Few of us could've predicted the Muscat boom while many of the geekier types thought Riesling would pop years ago when in reality it's been on a long, slow simmer. Where do you see the US wine consumers' wine tastes next leading?**

I'm a huge believer in traditional method sparkling wines including Cremant de Bourgogne, and sparkling wines from all over France are being discovered. And we've released an amazing line of 'Haute Couture' sparkling wines.

**What's your vision for English bubbly?**

I'm a fanatic for this--very precise with unique characteristics. I'm bullish as it adds to the overall diversity as our English friends are doing more than raising sheep! For English people it's very exciting.

**Have you advice for a sommelier considering venturing into production or sales as a career change?**

While working the restaurant or bar floor be modest, be audacious, be open-minded, listen to the guests, be humble, and have fun. When you're ready to leave come and join us in sales; become one of our ambassadors as we need more people who know about wine. People often take their knowledge for granted. If you leave the floor continue to preach wine at a distributor or at the winery.

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