

The BAY AREA REPORTER

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Savor Sonoma

Valley vintners branch out



Here in the Bay Area, when we head up to wine country for the weekend, we're just as likely to be visiting Sonoma as Napa. To most of the world, Napa remains the stronger 'name brand' when it comes to California wine geography. Even locally, when Sonoma does have name recognition, there's confusion between the County and the Valley.

Earlier this spring, The Sonoma Valley Vintner's and Growers' Alliance (SVVGA) made a bold move toward changing that perception, with the debut of an intensive weekend-long showcase of local viticulture, **Signature Sonoma Valley**.

Local winemakers were celebrated –and oenophiles from across the country were educated– over a series of meals, tastings and in-depth panel discussions.



Buena Vista Winery

Buena Vista Winery (18000 Old Winery Rd., Sonoma

www.buenavistawinery.com) is among the oldest and most storied wineries not just in the Valley, but in all of California. Founded in 1857 by Hungarian Count Agoston Haraszthy de Mokesa –who had previously jump-started the American beer industry as the first cultivator of hops in Wisconsin– the Buena Vista complex is now owned by the flamboyant vintner Jean-Charles Boisset. A scion of a French winemaking dynasty, he has become one of the Valley's most ardent promoters.

Centered around a castle-like complex of stone buildings, the winery incorporates an impressive exhibition on the global history of winemaking, including a collection of hundreds of antique agricultural tools. Boisset's personally curated collection of crystal decanters is also on display.

A variety of unique tasting experiences are also available, including a blending class and a pairing of wines with live classical music.