

VINTAGES Wine Picks & Reviews

Providing a Unique & Affordable Selection of High Quality Red Wines and White Wines for Your Enjoyment. Also featured: Rosé, Port, Icewine, Champagne and Sparkling Wine for Special Occasions. Cheers!

Monday, November 13, 2017

Buena Vista Winery Open House at Char Bar

In late September, I was invited to a wine tasting at the [Char No. 5 Whisky Bar](#) located inside the Delta Hotel on Lower Simcoe Street in downtown Toronto to taste the wines from California's [Buena Vista Winery](#). I was one of the first to arrive and had plenty of space to cozy up to the bar at the back where "The Count" was pouring the wines. After the venue was nicely filled up with patrons, The Count came out from behind the bar and began to tell us the interesting story about himself and the winery.



The story begins with Agoston Haraszthy de Mokesam, the self-proclaimed "The Count of Buena Vista", a grape-grower in his homeland of Hungary who was born into a wealthy, land-owning family and grew up amidst famed orchards and vineyards that had been in his family for centuries. In 1840, he set sail for America and settled with his family in Wisconsin, founding the town of "Szepataj" - now known as Sauk City. He was also the first to plant hops in Wisconsin, spurring the American beer industry. However, the harsh winters in Wisconsin were problematic for grape-growing, so he moved west to California and eventually settled in Sonoma in 1856 where he knew he could grow superb grapes on great terroir.

Buena Vista Winery was founded by The Count in 1857 on a converted ranch and produced 6,500 gallons in the first vintage and continued to grow and expand over the next few years. The Count inspired many others, including friend Charles Krug who borrowed a press from Buena Vista for crushing grapes in Napa Valley and helped pioneer winegrowing in that equally famous valley.

In 1861, The Count built California's first gravity-flow winery and visited Europe to study and report on methods used in the old world in order to improve Californian viticulture. Following this extensive journey with his son, he brought back thousands of vines and samples representing over 487 varieties, many of which were planted throughout the vineyards at Buena Vista Winery. Capitalizing on the knowledge gained, he authored a book which went on to become an essential handbook for California vintners.



Later that decade, The Count left his prized winery and set out for Nicaragua to explore sugar growing and rum production. Unfortunately, his life ended abruptly in 1869 as he fell from a tree branch into an alligator-infested stream and was never to be heard from again. Back in Sonoma, without their visionary and widespread phylloxera setting in, Buena Vista Winery ceased production.

The winery was revived in the 1940's after the property was purchased by Frank and Antonia Bartholomew. In 2007, Agoston Haraszthy de Mokesa (1812-1869), the eccentric Count of Buena Vista and California's foremost grape protagonist, was inducted into the Culinary Institute of America's Vintners Hall of Fame, where he joined the ranks of many other world-class vintners. In 2011, Buena Vista became part of Boisset Family Estates, a renowned and

charismatic family with a collection of historic wineries and roots in Burgundy, France. Led in the U.S. by Jean-Charles Boisset, the family is committed to its partnership and continue the vision and legacy that The Count first created 150 years ago.

The performance was informative and a nice touch to the tasting. If you visit the winery in Sonoma, you can enjoy the full unique experience with The Count and a light, sound and visual show. Given the compelling story of this winery, I just might make a point to visit Buena Vista on my next visit to Sonoma.

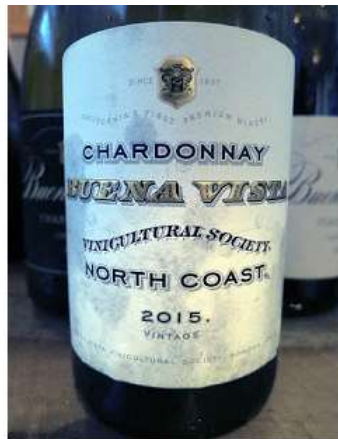
Thank you to Family Wine Merchants (FWM Canada) for the invite. Wine reviews of my favourite wines from this tasting are provided below. The Chardonnay is available in LCBO VINTAGES right now, while the two red wines will be coming through LCBO VINTAGES early next year. Please contact [FWM Canada](#) for more immediate needs or if you require large quantities.



Tasting Notes:

BUENA VISTA LA VICTOIRE BRUT CHAMPAGNE - AC, France (XD)

Blend of 70% Pinot Noir and 30% Chardonnay. this has fragrant yeasty, leesy, bready and pastry aromas with a clean hint of lemon waft from the glass. It's medium-bodied and quite light on its feet with balanced acids and fine mousse. The long lasting finish has a fine lemony aftertaste. Classy. Score: 90 pts



BUENA VISTA NORTH COAST CHARDONNAY 2015 - California, USA ([#396440](#)) (XD) - \$20.75

Very Californian on the nose with medium+ aromatics of ripe pineapple, golden apple, butter and a whiff of minerality. The palate is medium+ bodied and creamy textured with ripe fruited pear and apple flavours, plus leesy and vanillin oak accents. It has bright acids and finishes long with some bitterness. Score: 88 pts

BUENA VISTA CARNEROS PINOT NOIR 2013 - California, USA ([#304105](#)) (XD) - \$28.95

Open, medium-high intensity aromas of raspberry, sweet oak spices, dark cherry and some forest floor, earth, tea leaf, white pepper are quite complex. It's medium bodied on the palate with suave tannins that are well-integrated and lovely aroma replays followed by some herbally notes. Acids are very good and balanced. Excellent finish length. Coming to VINTAGES Mar. 31, 2018. Score: 90 pts

BUENA VISTA CHATEAU BUENA VISTA CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2014 - Napa Valley, California, USA ([#539106](#)) (XD) - \$59.95

The highly aromatic nose offers a complex bouquet of currant, cassis, mint, red & black fruits, and forest floor aromas. It's full-bodied with polished tannins and very nice aroma replays on the structured palate to go along with mouth-watering acids. Some warmth on the mid-palate, but is supported well by the fleshy fruit. Excellent finish length. A big, powerful Napa Cab to enjoy now or over next 15+ years. Coming to VINTAGES Feb. 3, 2018. Score: 91 pts