

MARKET WATCH



Aiming to bridge the winemaking cultures of his native Burgundy with California, Boisset Family Estates president Jean-Charles Boisset has been acquiring historic properties in the Golden State, focusing on the discovery of new California terroirs.



BOISSET'S California Vision

Jean-Charles Boisset is applying Burgundian skills to craft new, terroir-based California wines • BY DAVID FLEMING

At DeLoach Vineyards in Sonoma County's Russian River Valley, maps of the Burgundy vineyards adorn the winery and guesthouse walls. "I've put them there to remind us of our goal—which is to identify micro-terroirs that will become famous as true California identities," says Jean-Charles Boisset, president of DeLoach owner Boisset Family Estates.

Boisset aims to bridge the winemaking cultures of California and his native Burgundy, where Boisset, La Famille des Grands Vins, was founded in 1961. Napa Valley-based Boisset Family Estates has spread its wings in California in recent years, acquiring DeLoach in 2003, Napa Valley-based Raymond

Vineyards in 2009 and Buena Vista Carneros in April of this year. With each venture, the focus has been on historic, terroir-based wineries that have strong identities. Boisset's California activities also include Alexander Valley-based Lyeth Estate, a Sonoma property renowned for its pioneering work on Meritage wines.

"We're capitalizing on the heritage and history of our California wineries while also refocusing their identities," Boisset says. "We have a leadership role to play, partly because of our strong background in Burgundy. We want future generations to observe what we've done in mapping and understanding key California vineyards, just as in Burgundy."

Boisset aims to make Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon staple for Raymond Vineyards, while developing a new style of Meritage wines with the launch of several innovations.

"It's my own personality," he says. "But the wine is Sonoma, Russian River, Sonoma Coast and so on. That's what I'm proud of."

After the 2009 harvest, Boisset acquired Raymond. The 2010 vintage represented the company's first full year of production for the label. Director of winemaking Stephanie Boisset joined in February 2010 from Far Niente to lead a team that includes Kathy George, who's been at Raymond for

Boisset is implementing an ambitious program at Raymond that includes a number of innovations. One new offering is a Sommelier Selection—a Cabernet Sauvignon wine, which will be chosen by Raymond's sommeliers, who will be chosen by Raymond Boisset to assist in the blending process at the winery. The selection, which has no suggested retail price, is only available to the off-premise market as a single label. As an exclusive to the off-premise market, the Family Classic (\$20 a 750-ml. bottle), a Cabernet Sauvignon. Other new labels include Boisset's "R Collection" called Field Blend, Lot 1, made in a Chateaufort-du-Pape style with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petite Sirah, with some Carignane and Mourvèdre added for complexity. "The idea is to build upon Raymond as a staple Cabernet and Chardonnay house while creating new things," Boisset says. "We want to develop a new Napa Valley style, and the quality evolution will continue to be dramatic."

Boisset launched the Vineyard Designate label for DeLoach Vineyards (pictured), and the upper-tier offering now includes 24 wines.