

# Everybody Loves Raymond



BY MARK GMUR, C.W.E.

Raymond Vineyards, founded in 1970, is one of Napa Valley's greatest estates with deep roots in the region's history, and, since visionary President Jean-Charles Boisset of Boisset Family Estates acquired the property in 2009 and completed renovations in 2011, it has also become the most unique and interactive vineyard experience in Napa. From the wines to the Raymond experience, everyone is talking.

"For years, Raymond has been *the* benchmark cab and it's been nice to re-awaken everyone about Raymond", said Director of Winemaking Stephanie Putnam. Putnam brings expertise and skill to the Raymond team, developed from her time as Winemaker at Hess and Far Niente. Under her guidance, with meticulous attention to in the vineyards and in the cellar, the wines continue to improve as the brands grows.

When she arrived in 2009, Putnam and her team singled out lots by implementing micro-production fermentation, tripling production of small lots. Putnam describes these lots as additions to the spice rack to add complexity and depth to the final blends. In addition, she re-examined the use of French oak, and in 2011 replanted a portion of the Rutherford vineyard, in an attempt to enhance the quality of the fruit and the mouth feel of the wine.



*Jean-Charles Boisset and Stephanie Putnam sip at their 'spice rack' of small lots*

Arriving in 1933, the Raymond family became deeply connected to the valley's winemaking origins, ultimately creating a 90-acre estate straddling Rutherford and St. Helena in the heart of the Napa Valley that remains today one of Napa's pioneering original estates.

Today, Raymond is one of Napa's most dynamic destinations. Dedicated to inspiring their guests' passion for fine wine, Boisset has created an environment of exploration, creativity, and elegant whimsicality, where each in a series of diverse experiences progresses visitors into another world discovery.



*The Theater of Nature is a beautiful illustration of the life of wine and the influence of biodynamics*

While you may have heard of the eccentric and playful interactive experiences that are a part of the Raymond experience, undoubtedly the most significant change was to convert the estate to biodynamic and organic winegrowing in 2010. Raymond is in pursuit of organic and ultimately biodynamic certifications for the estate vineyard, a hallmark of wineries in the Boisset portfolio. This massively complex and expensive undertaking is core to everything that Boisset stands for, above all the fun, glitz and glam is a love of the terroir and respect for nature unmatched in the business.

The Raymond Experience is similar to the portfolio of wines in that each room and each wine are



uniquely expressive. More than anything, Raymond makes wine approachable, both in wine education and enjoyment. Raymond engages your senses in a very literal sense; fabrics samples and perfume bottles line a hall, reminding you what velvet, leather, silk feel like and what cherries, petrol, and spice smell like.

Raymond is for everyone. There is a tier of wine for any occasion and for any level of connoisseur. Much the same, somewhere in the experience at Raymond there is at least one room that really speaks to every visitor.

The two-acre Theater of Nature is the largest educational exhibit on biodynamic farming in the Napa Valley. It showcases how all the “actors” in the Theater of Nature play a crucial part in crafting quality wine, from the soil to the vineyardist to larger forces such as the lunar cycle. Like a performance, the Theater of Nature is divided into five acts, with each act devoted to a particular component of nature. Guests are invited to stroll through a self-guided tour, either via on-site signs or an audio tour accessible on their smart phone, and discover their role as actors on nature’s stage.

## GENERATIONS

### NAPA VALLEY RESERVE

### SOMMELIER SELECTION - ON PREMISE EXCLUSIVE -

### R COLLECTION BY RAYMOND

Walk directly through the main building, through the courtyard to the exclusive JCB Lounge: the only space on the property devoted to the JCB collection of wines. This line of wine, impressed Jean-Charles so much that he decided to put his initials on the bottle and to number each wine based on significant years in his life. Each bottle offers an engaging tale from Jean-Charles unique life story and a distinct flavor profile.

Each room is stylistically unique: from the warmth of the Red Room to the disco-modern Blending Room. However, they all come together like an orchestra, celebrating all aspects of the wine world, from the most classical and the most eccentric.



Surrounded by oak barrels on all sides and illuminated by candlelight, The Barrel Room provides an intimate setting for Boisset and Director of Winemaking Stephanie Putnam to sample wines straight from the barrel before they are ultimately bottled into District Cabernets and Generations. Step out of The Barrel Room, directly into The Crystal Cellar: an inimitable candlelit room boasting stainless steel walls, a mirrored tasting bar, and a collection of Baccarat glassware housing Raymond’s District and Generations Cabernets.



The Raymond Experience is the brain-child of Jean-Charles. It speaks to his vision, his commitment to nature, and his love of wine. Thus, it is only appropriate that Raymond now serves as the U.S. Headquarters for Boisset Family Estates. Partnering in 2007, Boisset Family Estates is The Mark Wine Group’s first and biggest supplier. Since the renovations were completed last Fall, The Mark Wine Group has brought over 100+ private guests to The Raymond Experience and one thing is clear: Everybody Loves Raymond.