

Napa wine titans have transformed this quirky tasting room into a mythological 'palazzo of glass'

It's cloaked in 5 million mosaic tiles.



Napa Valley power players Jean-Charles Boisset and Gina Gallo-Boisset have reopened the tasting room at Flora Springs, the first winery the couple purchased together and their first joint project.

Florence Shen/S.F. Chronicle



As expected, the latest tasting room from [prolific Napa Valley winery founder Jean-Charles Boisset](#), whose name is synonymous with his unapologetically ostentatious sense of style — glittering Baccarat crystal, miles of red velvet, and plenty of leopard print — is a spectacle.

Unexpectedly, however, there are none of the trappings typically found at his wineries and tasting rooms, such as Raymond Vineyards and the JCB Collection. Instead, Flora Springs in St. Helena, which opened for tastings this week, is a modern tribute to Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí. The quirky structure, defined by its undulating roof, is now cloaked inside and out with a series of large-scale mosaics made from 5 million colored tiles.

“This is a palazzo of glass,” Boisset said, gesturing to the building’s shimmery, mermaid tail-inspired facade that’s meant to mirror the dramatic layers of scenery — the vineyards, Mayacamas Mountains and sky — behind it. “We said, ‘What if we do what Gaudí would do in

the 21st century? He would probably go to Italy, find glass mosaic instead of the broken mosaic he was using, and really decorate the building as a dégradé of green.”



Guests can sip wine by the glass or bottle, or order wine-infused cocktails, in the Flora Springs gardens.

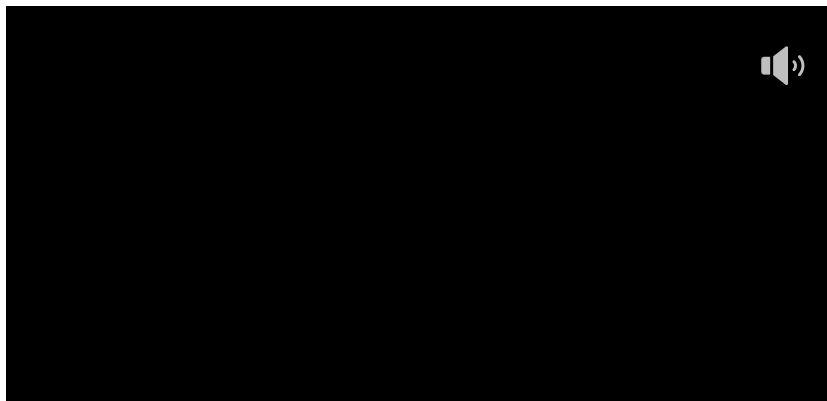
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The main factor in Boisset's departure from his usual design style is that this isn't another expansion of the Boisset Collection, which owns nearly 30 wineries worldwide. Flora Springs was purchased by Boisset and his wife, Gina Gallo-Boisset of the Gallo family, which owns the largest wine company in the U.S. It's the first time the couple, married since 2009, has owned a winery together.

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Gallo-Boisset and Boisset both collected Flora Springs' signature red and white blends, Trilogy and Soliloquy, before they got married. Alongside Joseph Phelps' Insignia, produced in 1974, Flora Springs' Trilogy was influential in helping to legitimize the category of Bordeaux-style red blends in California. "It's one of the best values of a Bordeaux-style blend in Napa Valley," Boisset said. "It's the wine, coming from France, that I'd buy at the grocery store and bring home."





Flora Springs, the newly reopened St. Helena winery from Jean-Charles Boisset and Gina Gallo-Boisset, is designed to be reminiscent of Gaudí's Casa Milà in Barcelona.

San Francisco Chronicle

Boisset first met Flora Springs owner John Komes, whose parents bought the historic site — it had an abandoned 19th-century "ghost

winery” and was once the home of pioneering vintner Louis M. Martini — in the late '70s, in 2008. The following year, Boisset acquired Raymond, which sourced grapes from Flora Springs. Over time, Boisset said, he and Komes became close. “I had a lot of discussions with John about the succession of his winery.”



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In 2020, the Komes family sold the Flora Springs estate and vineyard to the Cathiards, who own Bordeaux’s famed Chateau Smith-Haut-Lafitte, but they kept the brand and its Hwy 29 tasting room. In 2024, Boisset said that Komes called and asked if he wanted to acquire them.

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The two Napa Valley power players purchased Flora Springs in part to have something to leave behind for their twin daughters.
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Flora Springs presented two opportunities to the couple: Gallo-Boisset would get to work outside of Gallo on fine wines at a small winery for the first time, and she and Boisset could create something they could pass down to their twin 15-year-old daughters. "A lot of people have always asked us, 'When will you guys do something together?' It was kind of obvious when we got married that everybody was expecting that," Boisset said. "We held out and said, 'Maybe the best way is to do something for the next generation.'" They closed the deal in December 2024, and operated the tasting room until this February, when it closed for renovations.

The winery was originally named after Komes' mother, Flora. The couple decided to keep the name — and have continued to produce the winery's flagship blends — but, true to form for Boisset, conjured an elaborate mythological story about Flora, the Roman goddess of spring and flowers. The idea was to "capture what it was and add more beauty, evolve it," Gallo-Boisset said.



Left: Originally named for the mother of the former owner, Flora Springs has been given a mythological background by new owners Gallo-Boisset and Boisset. Right: More than 5 million mosaic now cover the property, inside and out, each one hand laid.

Photos by Florence Shen/S.F. Chronicle

The original zebra-striped, sandstone-colored building, built in 2004, has always stood out from the highway. Boisset brought back architect Joel Moriglio to help restore and reshape the top of the unconventional building to be “a bit like a cathedral,” reminiscent of Gaudí’s Casa Milà in Barcelona. Boisset then hired Sicis, a luxury mosaic company from Ravenna, Italy, to collaborate on the tile work. Inside, a large baris covered in a mosaic of either the wind or the ocean — Boisset said it’s open to interpretation — which merges with another mosaic covering the wall behind it. A reinterpretation of Italian artist Sandro Botticelli’s famous painting, “Birth of Venus,” it

depicts the first part of Flora's story: a nymph named Chloris transforming into Flora when she's kissed by Favonius, god of the West Wind.

The rest of the tasting room consists of three whimsical grottos, each with a mosaic that takes guests on Flora's journey to the earth and back during the Napa Valley growing season. The Awakening Cave features the night sky full of constellations that zeroes in on Gemini; when it reaches its peak in the sky, Flora awakens and comes down to earth. The constellation is also a tribute to his own Gemini twins, Boisset explained. The Bloom Cave encapsulates spring and feels like sitting in a pixelated garden. In the Harvest Cave, representing the end of the growing season, guests sip wine under a tiled canopy of vines.



Flora Springs features three “grottos,” each cloaked in a distinct mosaic mural. The middle cave, pictured, is called the Bloom Cave.
Florence Shen/S.F. Chronicle

Each cave also offers a distinct private tasting that includes cheese and charcuterie and is ideal for groups, priced at \$75-\$100 per person. In the Harvest Cave, for instance, the experience focuses on the making of the Trilogy blend; guests taste barrel samples of the three grapes that comprise it (Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Petit Verdot), then a blend of those samples, then finally three vintages of Trilogy.

Outside, there's an expansive courtyard that features gardens and an area with meandering retaining walls decorated with a butterfly-themed mosaic — an homage to Gaudí's Park Güell. There, guests can sit within semi-private mini enclaves. "We want people to be nested and cozy," Boisset said. Past a mosaiced vortex and up a flight of stairs, there's a rooftop lounge, which will open in October, plus what Boisset referred to as the "VVIP room," a bookable private space with a mosaic of the sky tiled across a pair of sliding doors, which open in dramatic fashion at the center of the sun.



Outside, there's an expansive courtyard that features gardens and an area with stone retaining walls decorated with a butterfly-themed mosaic — an homage to Gaudí's Park Güell.

Florence Shen/S.F. Chronicle

In addition to the cave experiences, visitors can order wine by the glass or bottle, or choose one of four flights priced between \$40 and \$125. There's a white wine-only flight called "Celestial Whites," which includes Soliloquy, a Sauvignon Blanc with small amounts of Chardonnay, Malvasia Bianca and Vermentino. "Malvasia is so amazing," Gallo-Boisset said of the esoteric grape. "It's very light. It's delicate. It dances on your tongue."

The "Sovereign Goddess" flight showcases the winery's most premium Cabernet Sauvignons, called Chloris, Flora and Favonius, and sourced from some of Napa Valley's best vineyard sites. Future vintages of Favonius will come from the illustrious Martha's Vineyard, which for 60 years was stewarded by just one winery, Heitz.

Flora Springs offers more than traditional wine, including low-alcohol, wine-infused cocktails, such as a Mojito that substitutes Sauvignon Blanc and sparkling wine for rum. The cocktails are also a fixture at the Flora Springs sister lounge in downtown Napa, which opened in March. Boisset is developing a beer infused with geranium for the new tasting room as well. For children, there's a selection of grape juices.



Gina Gallo-Boisset and Jean-Charles Boisset have continued to produce Flora Springs' iconic red and white blends, but have also launched six new single-vineyard Cabernets.

Florence Shen/S.F. Chronicle

The winery's most unorthodox beverage will be “a revolution in the wine world,” Boisset said: wine infused with rose petals, poured straight from clay amphorae. The low-alcohol wine was inspired by the ancient Roman tradition of infusing water, which notoriously tasted bad, and sometimes wine, with rose petals. “You’re going to want to drink a bottle on your own,” he said, noting that he and Gallo-Boisset have been utilizing their home garden to experiment with flower wines for a decade.

In mid-August, a gourmet Mediterranean market — a departure from the American food-focused Oakville Grocery, which Boisset also owns — will open onsite, offering 400 items, most imported from Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Greece. The market will feature a fresco of Poseidon and other gods, similar to the fresco at Boisset’s former fine food atelier in Yountville, which closed in 2021. It will sell food to go or to eat there alongside the wines, including tartines, such as one with jamón Ibérico, fig preserve, Manchego and arugula; grazing boards, like the conservas board (anchovies, sardines, tuna belly, smoked mussels, preserved-lemon butter and grilled sourdough), plus salads and sandwiches. The truffle sandwich comes with roasted chicken, Parmigiano Reggiano, truffle aioli, arugula and crispy shallots. Pricing will be “reasonable,” Boisset said. “The idea is not to shy people away.”



In August, Flora Springs will open a Mediterranean marketplace serving food to take to go or consume onsite alongside the wines.
Florence Shen/S.F. Chronicle

Flora Springs — which accepts walk-ins, offers tastings under \$50, and accepts children and dogs — is indeed more approachable than most Napa Valley tasting rooms, which have been criticized for being too expensive and exclusive. Its ornate and theatrical design, however, much like all of Boisset's endeavors, may not be for everyone.

Flora Springs. 677 St. Helena Highway, St. Helena. florasprings.com