

The Mercury News

LIFESTYLES

Most over-the-top Napa wine experience ever: JCB Tasting Salon & Atelier

By Marlin Orlin
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Get your selfie sticks ready.

Who else but Jean-Charles Boisset, the colorful Raymond Vineyards proprietor, could dream up a leopard print-covered, velvet tasseled, gold-gilded wine salon, dripping with Baccarat crystal chandeliers? Wine tasting at Yountville's new JCB Tasting Salon & Atelier is the most extravagantly over-the-top experience ever.

The vibe: JCB is all out glam, glitz and dazzle, with French flair. Sure, the salon is OTT, and the decor pushes extravagance and indulgence limits. You can buy wine, of course -- and you can also drop some serious dough on Parisian Goyard handbags and Lalique crystal wine decanters, as you sample JCB's sparkling wines, chardonnay and pinot noir offerings. Who knew we needed an 18K gold-plated bottle cooler (\$400), a Pasotti gold skull-handle shoe horn (\$142), or a Swarovski crystal and pearl-studded brooch adorning our bottle of JCB's The Surrealist? The brooch is \$150, the bottle, which doubles as a decanter once you've imbibed the wine, is \$350.



Stop by the Atelier by JCB, which is adjacent to Yountville's JCB Tasting Salon, to stock up on gourmet cheese, meat and other gastronomic provisions. (Photo: Mary Orlin/Staff)

Boisset just happened to be in the house the day of our visit. "JCB is Fifth Avenue, the Champs-Élysées and a mini Neiman Marcus condensed in one place to inspire and celebrate all the senses," he says.

There's no doubt that sparkling wine, caviar, foie gras, smoked salmon and charcuterie, artisan cheese, preserved butterflies displayed in glass cloches and haute fashion coffee table books will stimulate all five senses and then some. And yes, you can buy it all.



Don't miss:
The world's
first -- and
only -- Touch
Interactive
tasting
experience
(\$40),
developed by
Boisset, with

an interactive tech firm and a 3D printing company. You and three companions sit at what looks like an ordinary glass table. But put your wine glass, with a special 3-D-printed coaster attached to its base, on the surface and the table comes to life, playing a Google Earth video zooming in from planet Earth to the Yountville lounge. Boisset appears to greet you, talking about wine, history and the "JCB spirit." As salon hosts set each new glass down, the smart table recognizes what's in the glass. Swirl the glass, and bubbles appear, followed by pop-up text circles. Touch one for tasting notes, another for food pairings.

The interactive part has you creating your own tasting notes by choosing wine descriptor words: vivacious, lyrical, luminous, magnetic. Drag your words to the table's center to generate a "wine style word cloud" email, listing the wine and your descriptors. Hokey? Maybe, but it's a different approach to wine tasting and, we think, more fun than listening to someone lecture you about wine.

The sips: In the Premium Collection Flight (\$30), we sampled the 2014 No. 16 (\$55 for a bottle), an aromatic floral and tropical sauvignon blanc- semillon blend. The 2013 Passion Bordeaux blend (\$75), with cabernet sauvignon, malbec and merlot, is velvety and fruit-forward. The Surrealist Flight (\$50) features more red wines, including that jewel-embellished Surrealist wine.

The nibbles: Before or after you taste the wine, pop into Atelier by JCB, where you'll salivate over the gourmet goodies on display. You can't take the food into the wine-tasting room, but you can order up a Taste for Two (\$30) with cheese and charcuterie, or the cheese-only Grand Cru Tray for Two (\$30), and feast outside on the deck, or get it to go for a winery picnic. Atelier staff can whip up fresh sandwiches (\$10-\$14), too.

Details: Open daily; appointments required for the smart table JCB Touch Interactive tasting experience. 6505 Washington St., Yountville; www.jcbwines.com