

Dan Aykroyd's New Gig

The comedian and musician is now making wine in California

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The moment wasn't as outrageous as seeing him consume mass quantities as a Conehead on *Saturday Night Live* or battle a colossal flaming marshmallow man in *Ghostbusters*, but watching [Dan Aykroyd](#) frolic barefoot in a vat of Pinot Noir grapes was highly entertaining.

"I'm not here for every barrel," Aykroyd said as he avidly stomped away. At one point he smiled and feigned being light-headed. "You gotta watch the CO₂ in here."

The well-known actor, comedian and [Blues Brother](#) was in Santa Rosa, Calif., recently to launch his own brand of Sonoma County wines, which he is making in partnership with [De Loach Vineyards](#) and its owners, the Burgundy-based Boisset Family. Under the label Dan Aykroyd Discovery Series, the collaboration will first release a Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, both from the 2007 vintage and carrying a Sonoma County appellation.

The Sept. 18 kickoff at De Loach had its share of showmanship—[Jean-Charles Boisset](#), the affable president of Boisset, is not exactly a wallflower—but Aykroyd seemed at home, casual and open to conversation.

Aykroyd acknowledged that he's hardly the first celebrity to produce his own label, but it's clear that he's passionate about wine and has collected and tasted some of the best in the world. "I'm just not going to put my name on something," Aykroyd said. "It's not so much an ego thing. All I know is what my palate tells me."



Courtesy of Boisset Family Estates

Jean-Charles Boisset has teamed up with funnyman Dan Aykroyd on Cabernet and Chardonnay.

Boisset admitted that Aykroyd has not been an easy taskmaster. "Dan defines a vision and is really active in tasting the wine," Boisset said about putting together the initial blends. "He was tasting on a monthly basis and had a very dramatic effect on the wines."

A white Burgundy fan, Aykroyd said he wanted his Chardonnay to give a touch of "the Montrachet experience" with the Sonoma style—and deliver value as well. He also felt it was important that the wine be food-friendly. The first release, a blend from seven different vineyards, indeed achieves that delicate balance, offering fresh Russian River-style fruitiness with rich, complex aromas and flavors.

The Cabernet Sauvignon was more challenging, Aykroyd conceded. The first few blends just didn't have the balance of structure, easy tannins and spice that he was looking for. Aykroyd wanted something distinctive and found it when the De Loach team blended in 5 percent Carmenère from Alexander Valley. "I was so happy with that," Aykroyd said. "It's different from anything else that's out there."

Aykroyd said he first became interested in wine while filming *The Blues Brothers* in 1979, when Steve Cropper, famed Memphis guitarist and member of the movie's band, turned him onto Napa Cabernet Sauvignon, which eventually led Aykroyd to France and beyond.

"I kind of fixed on Sonoma about three years ago," Aykroyd said. "There's kind of a femininity and softness to [the wines] that I like." The actor said he doesn't have a particular Sonoma favorite. "If I see Sonoma on the label, I try it and I bounce around a lot tasting new things."

The Sonoma collaboration began when Boisset casually approached Aykroyd at a Toronto restaurant. Boisset was working on a Canadian wine project, and Aykroyd had just launched his Discovery Series label with [a collection of wines from his native Canada](#). With Aykroyd's enthusiasm for Sonoma wines, a partnership at De Loach seemed a natural.

Aykroyd's first release from Sonoma will total about 12,000 cases, with a suggested retail price of \$18 to \$20 per bottle. Look for the wines to arrive on store shelves by early next year.

But don't expect to see Aykroyd's image on the label; instead there's an image of an old-fashioned studio microphone. "I didn't want to put my face on it," Aykroyd said with his trademark wry smile, "because as I get fat [in real life] I'd look too thin on the bottle."

