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DeLoach Launches Bag-in-Barrel Pinot

Fairmont Hotel is first to showcase refillable, 10-liter package from Sonoma vintner

by Jane Firstenfeld



DeLoach's new bag-in-barrel brings fine Pinot Noir by-the-glass to on-premise locations: It's eco-friendly and kind to the bottom line.

San Francisco, Calif.--DeLoach Vineyards, which began producing Russian River Valley Pinot Noir in the 1970s, debuted what it is calling "barrel-to-barrel" service for the wine-by-the-glass program at the Fairmont San Francisco. DeLoach is supplying the Nob Hill landmark with mini-barrels containing 10-liter pouches of various Pinot Noir wines, including allocated vineyard designates.

According to Jean-Charles Boisset, president of Boisset Family Estates and DeLoach, the presentation is intended to offer consumers an experience "closest to an actual barrel tasting in a cellar." Boisset told *Wines & Vines* that a small barrel of wine he'd had at home inspired him to develop and commercialize the necessary technology to bring an authentic barrel-tasting experience to

restaurant customers.

Most bag-in-box wines are highly processed, he contended. The DeLoach Pinot, on the other hand, is only lightly fined and filtered before the pouches are hand-filled directly from the winery's own barrels and carefully nested in boxes, which are shipped to restaurants for placement in the mini-barrels.

Formed from oak and chestnut by a French cooperage, Vicard, and prominently branded

"DeLoach," they're designed to sit behind the bar; servers pour the Pinot from a sturdy spigot. "The barrel provides a visual icon that sets the expectation of the wine cellar experience," according to Todd Nagle, Fairmont San Francisco's food and beverage director.

The package also offers cost and environmental advantages, Boisset stated. Both the wine pouch and the cardboard box that holds it within the barrel are made from 100% recyclable material; the 10L "eco-bags" are sold for a price equivalent to a 9L standard case of bottled wines. Shipping weight is substantially reduced: The pouch weighs 68 grams, compared with 13 bottles, which would weigh more than 550 grams apiece. Boisset developed the package with Smurfit in Burgundy, where it is manufactured.

The additional benefit for on-premise operations is that, like traditional bag-in-box packaging, the barrels preserve the wines and eliminate waste from unfinished open bottles. "Every glass we pour is as fresh as if we'd just opened the bottle," Nagle said, noting that the possibility of TCA cork taint is also eliminated.

When the 10-liters have been sold, servers unscrew the back of the barrel, remove and replace the box, re-attach the spigot and replace the barrel "head."

Although the Fairmont launch was just three weeks ago, the mini-barrels have already found back-bar homes in 15 states, Boisset said from Denver, where he was introducing them at three more restaurants. "They should be in 500 to 600 accounts within six weeks," he said. At the moment, he added, 2,000 barrels are ready for shipment.



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