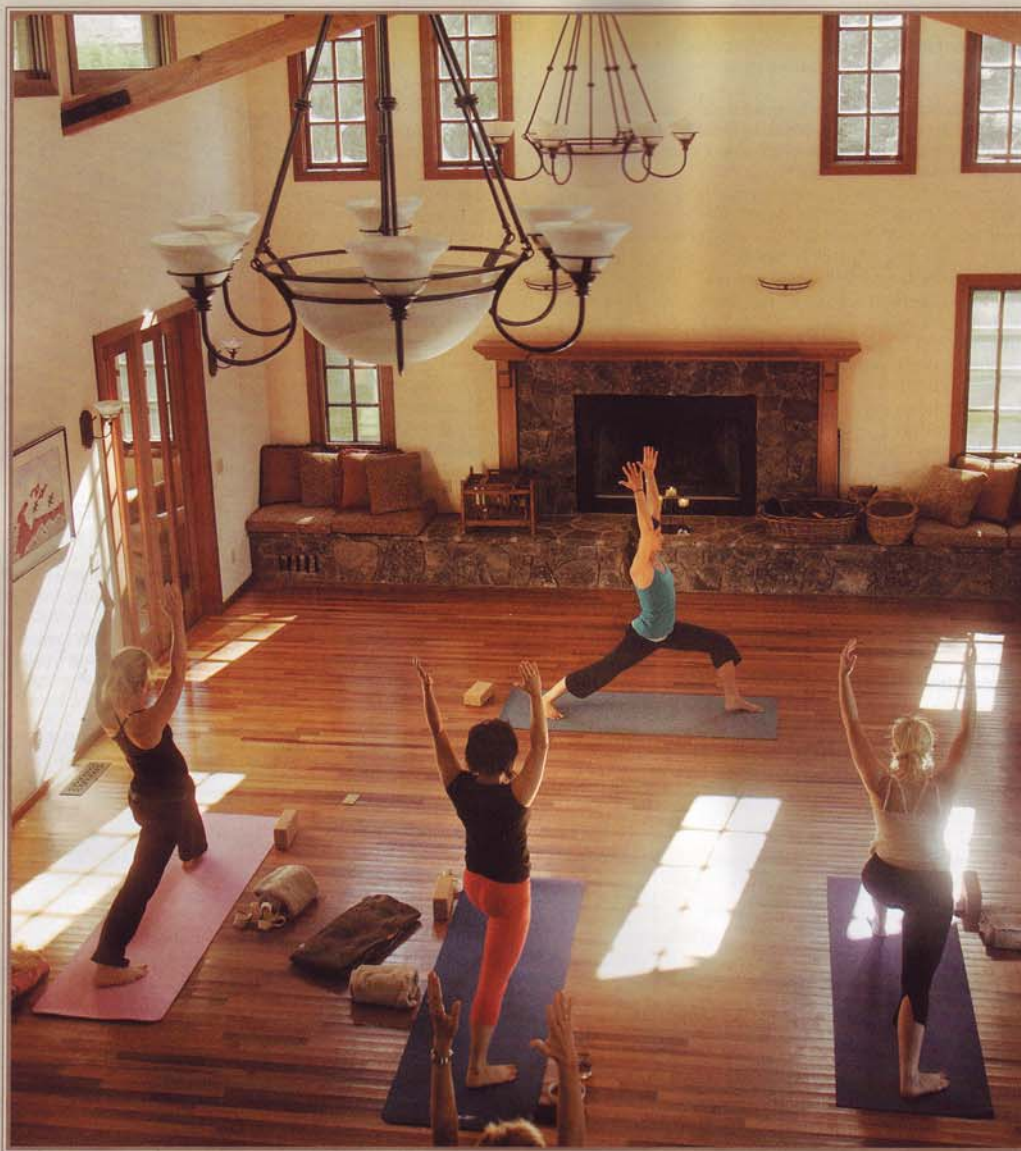


FALL 2007

Savor

WineCountry



HEALTHY INDULGENCE

A yoga retreat at DeLoach Vineyards stretches the mind, body and palate

DeLoach Vineyards' yoga retreats include twice-daily sessions, vegetarian meals and tastings of DeLoach's wines.



DeLoach Vineyards has gained critical acclaim for its Pinot Noir.

STORIES BY VIRGINIE BOONE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLIE GESELL

When the fall sun's heat and cooling waters compel, those in the know retreat to the Russian River region to sequester themselves in a comfy cocoon of wine, food and relaxation. Mothers and daughters, groups of friends separated by the demands of real life, it doesn't matter — they all find a way to get to DeLoach Vineyards and to the yoga retreat weekends they started this year.

The setting can't be beat. Behind the Russian River Valley's DeLoach winery, a popular destination for wine-tasting and picnicking, lies a grand old guesthouse with vaulted ceilings and walls of windows. A professional kitchen is keenly presided over by longtime winery chef Cyndicy Coudray, who leads master vegetarian cooking classes and prepares four-course meals during these retreats. Limited to 16 participants, DeLoach's yoga retreats include twice-daily yoga sessions led by local yogi Rosemary Garrison, organic vegetarian meals sourced from the winery's own half-acre garden, and of course, plenty of DeLoach wines.

"It's about enjoying the beauty of the wine and the setting, and having a weekend of healthy indulgences," says Garrison. "Have a glass of wine, enjoy your night, get a good night's sleep

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and come to a cleansing, vigorous practice the next morning.”

Upstairs, the guesthouse has a slate of comfy bedrooms; out back is a black-bottom swimming pool. Across from the house — and visible from the front room’s large windows — roam sheep and chickens, vital participants in



Jean-Charles Boisset, raised in Vougeot, France, has singularly focused on making DeLoach’s Pinot Noir the best possible.

DeLoach Vineyards

1791 Olivet Road, Santa Rosa
707-526-9111, www.deloachvineyards.com

Open daily 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Guided tours by appointment.

Next yoga retreat: September 14-16; \$1,100 with lodging; \$600 without.

For yoga reservations, call 415-289-4544.

Farmers Markets: Saturday-Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. June through October.

the winery’s biodynamic farming efforts. The eggs are also a feature of DeLoach’s summertime Saturday-Sunday farmers market, which tempts with just-picked estate produce, herbs and flowers, in addition to the eggs.

DeLoach’s history begins in 1970, when San Francisco firefighter Cecil DeLoach and his wife, Christine, first came to the Russian River Valley to raise wine grapes. They planted Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Zinfandel, and over the years became a marquee name in Sonoma County wine.

They grew quickly, from 90,000 cases in 1995 to 250,000 a few years later, then ran into financial trouble and sold in January of 2004 to the Boisset wine family, which has long cultivated grapes on some of Burgundy’s most hallowed ground.

Much of the passion and persistence for coaxing further greatness out of DeLoach comes from the dashing 37-year-old Jean-Charles Boisset. Raised in Vougeot, France, the tireless Boisset spearheads his family’s myriad ecological interests around the world.

With DeLoach he is singularly focused on making the best Pinot Noir possible.

“My grandparents had a love for the U.S. for the obvious reasons — the different wars, the American dream, the American people,” explains Boisset. “We decided years ago that beyond the Chardonnays and the Pinots of Burgundy, Sonoma County was the best.”

The Boissets looked around for years to buy or develop a vineyard here. When DeLoach filed for bankruptcy protection in 2003, Boisset jumped. (The DeLoach family began again with Hook & Ladder Winery just down the road in 2004.)

“We wanted to find something with a terroir approach, something with a family that had understood different vineyards, different clones, different rootstocks, and had a great winery and land,” Boisset explains. “DeLoach is a great name, really the first to plant Pinot in the area, the first one to be so prominently located in the Russian River in that way, and for us history is important.”

The change has been welcomed by wine reviewers all over the country. *Gourmet* magazine said of the DeLoach 2005 Pinot Noir, “(it) actually smells like Pinot. Ripe, but not overblown. Fair length and a touch of tannin. Very nice.” *Wine Enthusiast* named the 2004 30th Anniversary Cuvée Pinot Noir its wine of the year.

When the DeLoaches first came upon that old Zinfandel vineyard, the land was owned and farmed by Louis Barbieri, whose father had immigrated from Italy, part of a wave of newcomers with farming in their blood.

Some of the Barbieri plantings on that vineyard went back to 1905. Cecil and his son Michael planted Pinot Noir in 1973, crushing their first vintage of Barbieri Ranch Zinfandel in 1975.

With the Boisset family now at the helm and the Russian River Valley’s reputation in the stratosphere, there was no question Pinot Noir would be the focus.

Jean-Claude and Claudine Boisset, Jean-Charles’ parents, started building their family-owned collection of wineries in 1961.

They are now a leading producer of Pinot Noir, with a presence in France, Canada, Italy, Spain and Uruguay as well as California. They make some of the finest brands in Burgundy — *Domaine de la Vougeraie* in Nuits Saint Georges; *Jaffelin* in Beaune; Jean-Claude Boisset in Nuits Saint Georges; *Bouchard*

Aine & Fils in Beaune; *J. Moreau & Fils* in Chablis and more.

Their aim has always been to keep close to their Burgundian and terroir-driven roots and traditions, yet the Boissets, particularly Jean-Charles, are also keen to explore new places and new ways of doing things.

“Our mission is very simple,” he explains. “Make phenomenal wines we’re proud to take all over the world to the best tables; number two, sustainable farming for sure, organic and biodynamic is what we’re doing here; three, create a great team, which we have, male and female, both palates, always changing, creating, every day trying to make better wines.”

To that end, Boisset hired local Pinot-making guru Greg La Follette (*Flowers*, *Newton*, *Hartford Court*, *Tandem*) as consulting winemaker, there to complement a tenured team that included associate winemaker Julia Crosby, at DeLoach since 1996; winegrowing director Ginny Lambrix, hired to lead the biodynamics program; resident chef and organic farming guru Coudray, once a sommelier at John Ash who came to DeLoach in 1993; and associate winemaker Brian Maloney, who still helps his family with its vast sheep and cattle farm on the Sonoma Coast.

“We’re not here from Burgundy trying to make Burgundian wines,” Boisset assured. “The team is fully American; I’m the only French guy around. I’m only here to give some opinions, but I don’t make decisions. They create their best.”

Boisset also put DeLoach on a major diet, as he likes to say, reducing its annual case production from 300,000 to 100,000 to focus on quality and clarifying its missions: to produce Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Zinfandel.

Still, an added bonus of a visit to the DeLoach tasting room is not only in seeing the evolution of its own wines, but occasionally having the chance to taste the rare grands crus and premiers crus from the Boissets’ holdings in France.

“There is a great terroir, a great soil, a phenomenal energy in this location,” Boisset adds. “We’re not yet where we want to be and you always will hear that. We’re never satisfied; there are always things we can do better.”

For yogi Garrison, it doesn’t get any better than a weekend of yoga. “Twice-daily yoga, organic vegetarian meals, top drops from DeLoach’s bottlings,” she muses. “It all contributes to mindfulness, well-being and camaraderie.” •