



# Jean-Claude Boisset

## The man from Burgundy who thought big



**JEAN-CLAUDE BOISSET'S STORY** is exemplary. It is the story of a Burgundian, an outsider to the region's wine growers who, in forty years, has become the second biggest French exporter of fine wines. It is the story of a young man from Gevrey-Chambertin, who grew up in the middle of the vineyards gave the local wine growers a hand and logically entered the world of wine growing. It is story of a young man who was not so interested in studying but with a gift for wines and business. He created his own trading company in 1961, at the age of eighteen. Jean-Claude Boisset proved to be an exceptional salesman. He sold his wines from door to door and was successful enough at it to enable him to buy a few parcels of land. This became the embryo of a group of wine producers and companies which now buys the harvest of 2000 wine growers and exports 42% of its production. He helped the group to develop through the 1980s, buying trading companies such as J. Moreau & son, Charles Vienot, Morin & son, Bouchard Aîné, Ropiteau brothers. The visionary Jean-Claude Boisset then went further and opened a subsidiary in the States: Boisset-America.

And he did not stop there. The Boisset group, Jean-Claude with his children Nathalie and Jean-Charles, has continued to expand outside of Burgundy. In Beaujolais, with the acquisition of Mommessin, Thorin, Pellerin in the Rhone Valley, where he bought Louis Bernard and also in Languedoc-Roussillon with the purchase of Caroline de Baulieu. In 1999 he signed a joint venture with Vincor, the biggest Canadian wine company. With them he created a 55-hectare estate in Ontario, the Clos Jordanne. In 2003, the Boisset family signed partnerships with the Vina Progreso estate in Uruguay and with Vina Corpora in Chile. The intention was to create top quality vineyards favourable to the development of the Pinot Noir, one of the famous Burgundy grape varieties.

The Boisset group has diversified its interests and also sells sparkling wines from the Burgundy (Louis Bouillot), Savoie (Varichon and Clerc) or Ligerie (Grandin) regions. They have also shown an interest in various spirits grouped under the name 'local aperitifs' (apéritifs de terroir): crème de cassis, l'Héritier – Guyot (black-currant liquor) and since 2000, Casanis, Avèze, Rapha, Valauria and Duval.

Boisset's logo is a vine leaf and their business title: "Boisset, the family of great wines". A clear indication of Boisset's desire to offer a range of top quality wines. Boisset is no longer a 'trader-grower', the usual denomination for Burgundian wine producers, he is a 'wine maker-grower', creating a link between the wine grower and producer. At the same time, the Boisset family is developing sustainable viticulture, and even a biodynamic approach like at the Domaine de la Vougeraie, 37 hectares of first class vintage (grand and premier cru) in Prémieux in the 'Côte de Nuits' hills. To ensure success, they can count on a team of technicians working hand in hand with the producers.

Today, Boisset, the second biggest exporter and third biggest French producer of fine wines, is present in 80 different countries. The young man from Gevrey-Chambertin certainly thought big.

*Claire Brosse*

### In figures

- Turnover:  
**235 Million Euros** in 2003
- Production:  
**75%** Fine Wines  
**21%** Apéritifs de terroir  
**4%** Sparkling wines
- Share of market for Burgundy wines:  
**5% - 9 Million bottles**
- Share of market for Beaujolais:  
**13% - 23 Million bottles**