

# Wineries *To* Watch

Four new Cabernet producers making exceptional wines



Bella Oaks owner Suzanne Deal Booth

## RETURN ADDRESS { BELLA OAKS }

Insiders might recognize the Bella Oaks name from the long run of Heitz bottlings from the site. Planted in 1973 by Belle and Barney Rhodes, the vineyard was among the first in Napa devoted exclusively to Cabernet Sauvignon at that time. Heitz began purchasing the fruit in 1976 and continued to produce its single-vineyard version through the 2008 vintage.

Enter Suzanne Deal Booth, who in 2010 bought the vineyard from the Rhodes' relatives, the Gargiulos, who had taken it over after Belle and Barney died in the 2000s. Booth provided the fruit to her neighbors the Staglins for a joint venture under their label from 2011 through 2016. She then met Nigel Kinsman, winemaker for Accendo and his own Kinsman Eades, and they decided to create a new project from the site. After choosing not to release their '16 and '17 vintages, the pair has released the 2018 as their debut.

Of the site's approximately 20 acres, 12.5 are under vine, divided into two blocks of equal size. There has been some replanting along the way, and the vineyard now includes Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Block 1 was replanted again after 2019 and is not yet back in production. Block 2 was replanted in 2016 and is already cranking along nicely, with the vines enjoying their well-drained footing of Bale gravelly loam. David Abreu handles the farming, which is being done biodynamically, and the site is certified organic.

The 2018 blends 12% Petit Verdot and 8% Cabernet Franc with the Cabernet Sauvignon—relatively high percentages. "That's what the vintage and vineyard gave," says Kinsman, who ferments mainly in stainless steel with a touch in barrel, before moving entirely to barrel for malolactic. Aging lasted for 22 months in 82% new oak, both factors that might shift in accordance with the vintage.

—James Molesworth

95 **Bella Oaks** Rutherford 2018

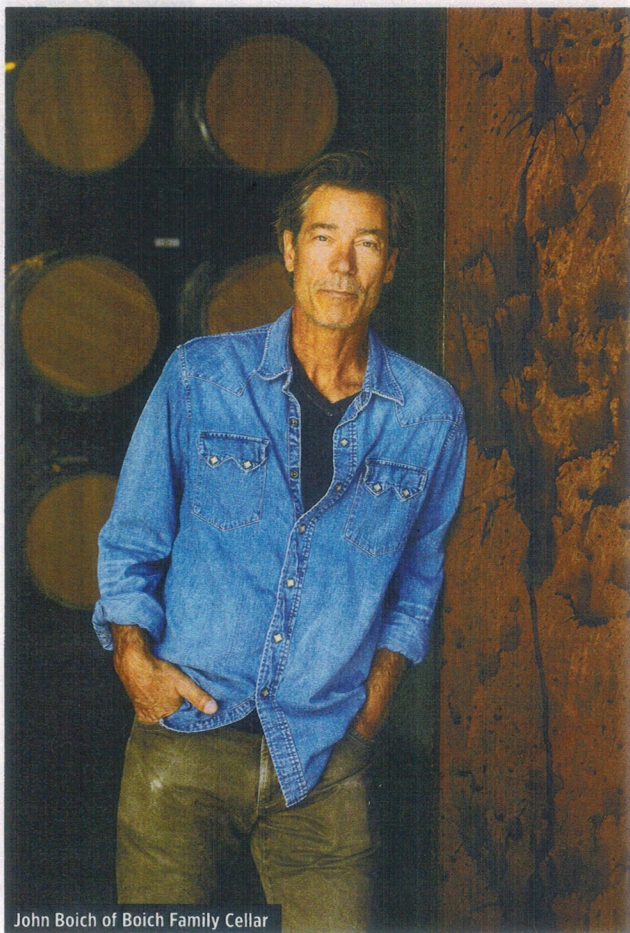
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## MOUNTAIN MAN { BOICH FAMILY }

The retiree-turned-vintner story is common in Napa, but John Boich's tale is more bootstrapped than most. After purchasing 10 acres of raw land high up on Mount Veeder in 1997, he spent weekends sleeping in a camping shed, toiling to clear the rugged terrain for eight years before planting his first vine.

This was a passion project at the time, but as Boich's day job as an economist and financial analyst in San Francisco was nearing its end in 2011, he decided to get serious about wine. "The more time I spent there, the more I loved it, so I began figuring out how it could be a bigger part of my life."

A friend introduced Boich to Jeff Ames of Rudius in Napa, who makes the wines for Tor and consults for several other small labels. Boich had planted Syrah on his property, but there was too little of it to be commercial, so Ames procured a few rows of Cabernet Sauvignon from Rutherford's Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard to get them started.



John Boich of Boich Family Cellar