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Distinctive, With A Mellow Aftertaste

Nov 1, 2004

The goal was to build a state-of-the-art winemaking facility that would complement the bucolic serenity of the Napa Valley property while conveying the quality and elegance of the wine. In the past, the owner of Quintessa Winery had harvested grapes and sent them out to independent producers to crush, ferment, and bottle. But now he wanted to build his own full-service winery, including a tasting center, production facility, and corporate offices.

The solution is a simple, sculptural, crescent-shaped building that is integrated into the hillside with seeming effortlessness. A “gravity-flow” method of winemaking was used. Grapes are crushed above, on the terrace, and funneled down via roof hatches into fermentation tanks below.

The design minimizes the potentially damaging impact of a substantial structure on the existing vineyards and landscape by reflecting the natural contours of the geography. The use of irrigated sod roofs and night air ventilation produce natural regulation of temperature and humidity, which reduces the need for mechanized refrigeration. Visitors sample wine in a cave atmosphere and take tours of the production facilities and vineyards.

The project was a close collaboration among the owner, the winemaker, the architect, and the wine production consultant. Gathering a team of consultants at the beginning of the project allowed for a more efficient and productive design process. It also ensured that the project came in on schedule and on budget.

The design utilizes an open floor plan that will be able to accommodate changes in the future.

Finalist: Quintessa Winery

St. Helena, Calif.

Client

Huneus Vintners LLC, St. Helena, Calif.

Architect

Greg Warner; Walker Warner Architects, San Francisco