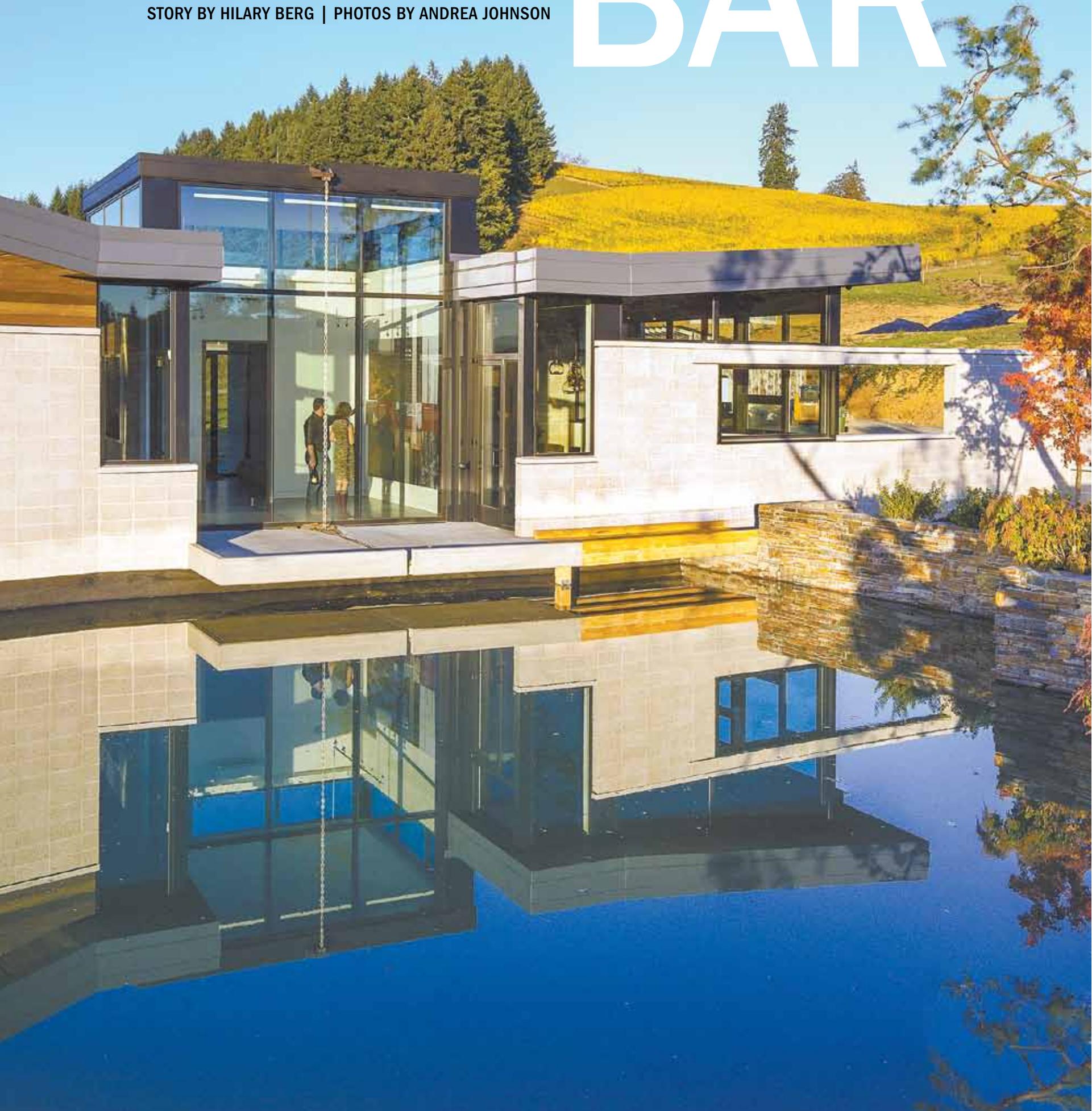


Raising THE BAR

STORY BY HILARY BERG | PHOTOS BY ANDREA JOHNSON

Neighborhood barn
reimagined into
first-class experience



For more than a year, I've witnessed the incredible evolution of Saffron Fields — from the road. You see, I'm a neighbor; I live down the street and up the hill. Practically every day, I drive past what has transformed into a world-class vineyard and, now, a destination tasting room, just east of Yamhill.

I remember when owners Sanjeev Lahoti and Dr. Angela Summers planted the first 10 acres of Pinot Noir — all Pommard — in 2007, under the direction and management of Luke Pedotti of Results Partners. Two years later, they planted 12 more — consisting of Dijon clones 115 and 777 as well as Wädenswil.

Once the vines were in place, the couple tackled the barn, all 22,000 square feet. The former, historical Laughlin Dairy barn was too large and did not meet current construction and safety codes, so the Houston-based couple made the decision to take it apart and salvage the wood. A monumental task.

Board by board, the structure was meticulously deconstructed by Rich Mathis and Peter Braun of Wood is Wonderful Foundation in Sheridan. A remarkable feat to watch — from the road — the dismantling took almost two months. Half the wood was re-purposed for use in the tasting room's construction and saved for a future winery; the other half served as payment to Mathis and Braun for their work on the project.

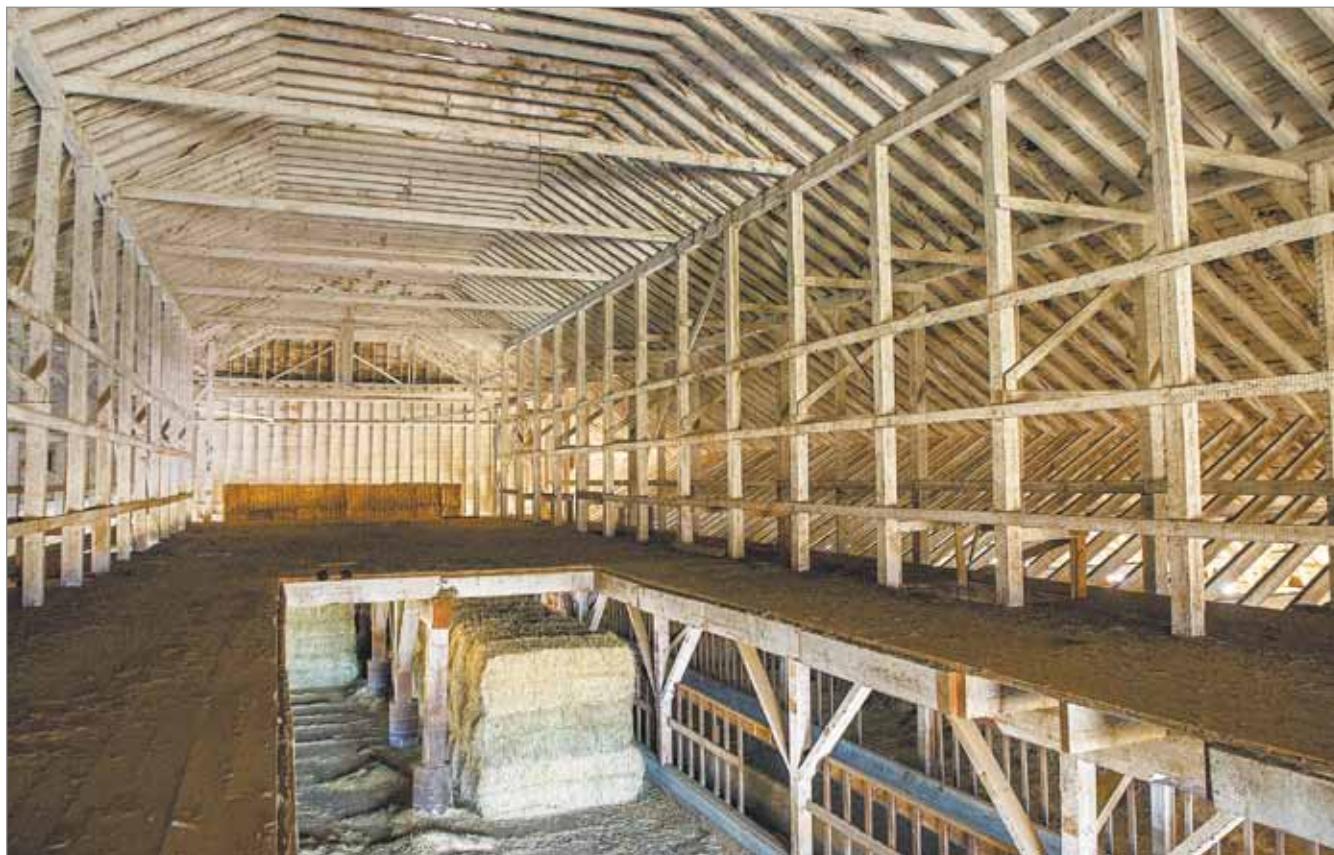
After the barn was stacked into

organized piles last September, Lahoti, Summers and John Mead, of Cellar Ridge Custom Homes of McMinnville, broke ground on the 3,248-square-foot building. A year later, the tasting room is finished.

Saffron opened its doors to the public in mid-September, but it wasn't until a month later, when the landscaping was closer to completion, that I made my official turn off Laughlin Road and up the drive to check out the neighborhood's newest.

Knowing the gardens were a crucial part of the Saffron experience, I had high expectations for the design; all were met and more. The Japanese-style garden is a sight to see. Summers, an avid gardener, found design inspiration after visiting Tokyo and Kyoto. She was especially struck by the Japanese integration of interior and exterior as one continuous space.

The couple met world-renowned landscape architect Hoichi Kurisu in Houston after learning about the breadth of his work. His firm, Kurisu International, has designed intricate gardens across the country, including the Portland Japanese Garden —



OPPOSITE: The heart of Saffron Fields' tasting room is called the Jewel Box, which will house art exhibits in the future. Through the floor-to-ceiling windows, guests can enjoy the pond and Japanese garden. **LEFT:** The Laughlin Dairy barn, before it was dismantled to be used in the construction of the tasting room, measured 22,000 square feet. **TOP:** Artwork is displayed throughout the tasting room, including "Coded Spectrum" by Leo Villareal (right wall). **MIDDLE:** The modern firepit acts as a gathering place on the expansive patio. **ABOVE:** Sanjeev Lahoti and Angela Summers with their 2-year-old Yorkie, Iris.



SCAN THIS QR CODE
to access a collection
of **SAFFRON FIELDS**
videos, including the
making of the tasting
room's hand-blown
light fixtures at **ESQUE**
STUDIO in Portland
and other videos by
Andrea Johnson.

ABOVE: Light fixtures from Portland firm Esque Studio hang above a custom-made table inside Saffron Fields' private dining/meeting room.
RIGHT: Jaume Plensa's "Tale Teller II," a life-sized sculpture crafted from stainless steel and stone sits at the edge of one of the ponds at Saffron Fields' new tasting room.

and now, Saffron Fields.

His vision and expertise are evident. The patios, totaling 2,215 square feet, incorporate flawlessly into the water features, including two ponds — one is named Thales after the Greek philosopher; the other, Helios, for the Titan Sun God. Massive granite boulders and unusual greenery — including black pines grown and meticulously pruned by Kurisu's nursery for 30 to 40 years before being transplanted — create an exotic atmosphere enhanced by the Zen-style fire pit — keeping tasters toasty on this cool autumn day.

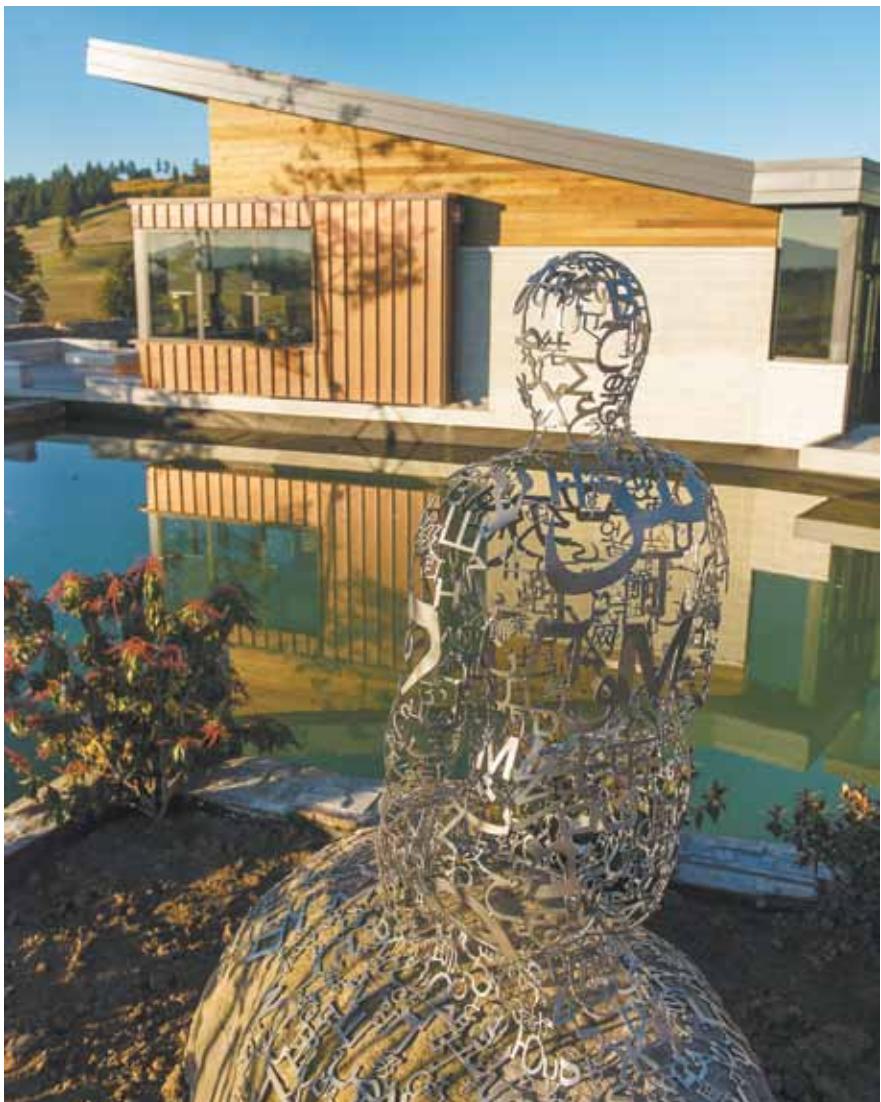
A series of three sculptures has been designed into the landscape. The most striking — and the only one to be placed — is Jaume Plensa's "Tale Teller II," a life-sized sculpture crafted from stainless steel and stone. For Summers, the piece embodies Saffron Fields' essence. The figure is comprised letters from different languages, inviting viewers to sit and create their own narrative. A notable work, the Plensa was loaned to the Portland Art Museum while construction was executed.

Although I could have easily spent my entire visit exploring the gardens, I headed inside the tasting room, an equally stimulating space. Envisioning the building, Lahoti and Summers were inspired by architecture using glass, wood and water for their abilities to evoke emotion through fluidity and serenity.

Architect Richard Shugar, principal of 2FORM Architecture in Eugene, focused on two fundamental principles when designing Saffron: the structure being rooted in the landscape — like the vines — and the "Jewel Box" room as the heart and anchor of the building.

As I entered the main doors, the Jewel Box came into view. I immediately noticed the glass wall — connecting the interior with the exterior — revealing a cantilevering patio hovering over one of the ponds, giving the room a feeling of being suspended above the water.

In the future, the Jewel Box will showcase art exhibitions, but on this day, the space featured historical displays, illustrating the site's agricultural past, the painstaking



Grand Year FOR OPENINGS

Since last Thanksgiving Weekend, several tasting rooms have opened or remodeled their spaces. See what they have to offer!

■ Archer Vineyard/Rizzo Winery

32230 N.E. Old Parrett Mountain Road
Newberg, OR 97132
Hours: Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Opened: July 2013

The new tasting room combines a lush and tranquil atmosphere with all the modern conveniences featuring two boutique labels of single varietal wines.

■ Anindor Vineyards

1171 Vintage Drive
Elkton, OR 97436
Hours: Wed.-Sun., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Opened: June 2013

Anindor's 30-foot diameter yurt has an industrial feel with a feminine flare, featuring bamboo flooring, granite wine bar and corrugated metal walls.

■ Blakeslee Vineyard Estate

20875 S.W. Chapman Road
Sherwood, OR 97140
Hours: Wed.-Sun., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Opened: May 2013

High in the hills above Sherwood, Blakeslee offers beautiful wines, stunning valley and mountain views, hospitality beyond all expectations.

■ Cerulean Winery (PDX Location)

1439 N.W. Marshall Street
Portland, OR 97209
Hours are Tues.-Thurs. and Sun., 2 to 10 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 to midnight.
Opened: June 2013

Cerulean's new wine bar in the Pearl offers a relaxed ambiance, exposed brick, wood beams and two art gallery spaces. Wine, art and small plates.

■ Dana Campbell Vineyards

1320 N. Mountain Avenue
Ashland, OR 97520
Hours: Thurs.-Sun., noon to 5 p.m.
Opened: February 2013

In the foothills, just two miles from downtown Ashland, Dana Campbell offers quality, estate-grown wines with an irresistible view. See the "other" side of Ashland: relaxed and comfortable.

■ De Ponte Cellars (Carlton Location)

209 N. Kutch Street
Carlton, OR 97111
Hours: Fri.-Sun., noon to 5 p.m.
Opened: October 2013

Inside the former Carlton Fire Station, DePonte Cellars features a refined space to sip wine and purchase the owner's free-range, grass-fed beef from Lonesome Ranch.

■ Eugene Wine Cellars

255 Madison Street
Eugene, OR 97402
Hours: Wed.-Sat., 4 to 8 p.m.
Opened: May 2013

Come and experience the uniqueness of our urban winery in the Eugene downtown/Whitaker neighborhood. Taste our own b2 and RECESS Wines, plus featured custom crush wines and local beers.

■ Evening Land Vineyards/ LeCadeau Vineyard/Tertulia Cellars

1326 N. Highway 99W
Dundee, OR 97115
Hours: Daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Opened: May 2013

Three wineries join together in the west end of Dundee for a high-class experience in a bright, modern space.

■ Fire + Flood, Oregon

602A E. First Street
Newberg, OR 97132
Hours: Thurs.-Mon., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Opened: October 2013

Chapter 24 Vineyards' new tasting room in Downtown Newberg is named for the soils that make the area so perfect for growing winegrapes.

■ Ghost Hill Cellars

12220 N.E. Bayliss Road
Carlton, OR 97111
Hours: Sat.-Sun., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Opened: August 2013

Modeled to resemble a prospector's shack, the tasting room — hand-built by the owners — features a sliding barn door and windows from the Trappist Abbey's original church.

■ Lachini Vineyards (Carlton Location)

258 N. Kutch Street
Carlton, OR 97111
Hours: Sat-Sun., noon to 5 p.m.
Opened: April 2013

The historic property once housed a railroad car repair shop but has recently been renovated into the modern winery and tasting room.

■ Longsword Winery

8555 Highway 238
Jacksonville, OR 97530
Hours: Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(closed in January)
Opened: February 2013

With its close proximity to Woodrat Mountain (world famous for paragliding), the tasting is perfect for viewing the paragliders while sipping wine.

■ Naked Winery (Bend Location)

330 S.W. Powerhouse Drive #110
Bend, OR 97702
Hours: Mon.-Sat., 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.;
Sun., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Opened: June 2013

Located in the Old Mill District, Naked's second tasting room features granite bars, comfortable couches, inviting décor and a heated patio.

Anindor Vineyards' new yurt-style tasting room opened in June.



■ Noble Estate (Yachats Location)

504 Highway 101 N., Suites A and B.
Yachats, OR 97498
Hours: Fri.-Sun., 2 to 8 p.m.
(daily during high season)
Opened: October 2013

The winery's second tasting room combines the relaxed coastal atmosphere of Yachats with the charm of the vineyard.

■ The Pines 1852

202 Cascade Avenue, Ste. B
Hood River, OR 97031
Hours: Mon.-Wed., noon to 5 p.m.; Thurs.,
noon to 10 p.m.; Fri.-Sun., noon to 7 p.m.
Opened: August 2013

The new space is more intimate and inviting with a large cherry wood bar, bistro seating and a living room area for you to enjoy your wine with friends and listen to live music every Thursday.

■ Ponzi Vineyards

19500 S.W. Mountain Home Road
Sherwood, OR 97140
Hours: Daily, 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Opened: June 2013

Sample current releases and relax, fireside or on the covered terrace. Stunning views of the vineyard and valley. Tours of the gravity-flow winery by appointment.

■ Purple Cow Vineyards

105 N. Main Street
Newberg OR 97132
Hours: Daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Opened: October 2013

Purple Cow has started a multi-phased winery project in the old Newberg Steel building. Come see the tasting room in what will soon be the production area.

■ Sokol Blosser

5000 N.E. Sokol Blosser Lane
Dayton, OR 97114
Hours: Daily, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Opened: July 2013

As you move through the striking, modern building, rooms unfold into a series of distinct spaces designed to cater different needs. From luxury to casual, indoor and outdoor, it's all here.

■ Sweet Cheeks Winery

27007 Briggs Hill Road
Eugene, OR 97405
Hours: Daily, noon to 6 p.m.; Fri., noon
to 9 p.m.
Grand Reveal: Thanksgiving Weekend

Sweet Cheeks has expanded their existing tasting room by building an all-seasons covered patio featuring an outside bar and soapstone fireplace.

■ Terra Vina Wines (McMinnville Location)

585 N.E. Third Street
McMinnville, OR 97128
Hours: Thurs.-Sat., noon to 7 p.m.;
Sun., noon to 5 p.m.
Opened: February 2013

Located in charming Downtown McMinnville, the tasting room offers comfy couches in a warm atmosphere to sip wine and nosh on small plates.

■ TeSoÁria Winery (PDX Location)

4003 N. Williams Street
Portland, OR 97212
Hours: Sun.-Thurs., 1 to 9 p.m.;
Fri.-Sat., 1 to 10 p.m.
Opening: November 2013
TeSoÁria is bringing its award-winning wines from the Umpqua Valley to Portland Metro Area for tastes, glasses, growlers, bottle sales and unique small plates.

■ Wild Wines

4550 Little Applegate Road
Jacksonville, OR 97530
Hours: Fri.-Sun., noon to 5 p.m.
Opened: May 2013

The Southern Oregon tasting room features straw-bale walls for maximum insulation and efficiency, hickory floors, an impressive alder bar, woodstove and a one-of-a-kind built-in earthen bench.

■ Zimri Cellars/David Hill Winery

300 E. First Street
Newberg, OR 97132
Hours: Fri.-Sat., noon to 6 p.m.;
Sun., noon to 5 p.m.
Opening: November 2013

Here you can taste up to 10 different wines, from an off-dry Riesling to a Pinot Noir Port all made by Jason Bull, who most often you'll find pouring his creations.

deconstruction of the barn and bios on Saffron staffers, all professionally achieved with the help of photographer/videographer Andrea Johnson.

Throughout the rest of the tasting room, I explored the couple's personal collection of contemporary art from acclaimed artists. "Coded Spectrum" by Leo Villareal hangs on one wall with its light-emitting dancing diodes of color. Jennifer Steinkamp, Robert Rector, Justin Guariglia and others represent with impressive pieces, too. I, indeed, found myself studying the colors, textures and movement of each. I was fully engaged in the experience — something Summers aimed to encourage.

The interior's design reflects Kurisu's philosophy that interiors and exteriors should flow seamlessly rather than exist in separation. The building's windows are key in accomplishing this with 12- and 8-foot sections retracting completely, fram-

ENVISIONING
the building, Lahoti
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ing the view of the rolling green hills creating its own spectacular piece of art — especially when the sun sets.

The incorporation of the old-growth Douglas fir brings new life to the former barn. Designed by Jessica Helgerson of Portland, the interior features the reclaimed wood on much of the walls and ceilings, adding a warm, amber element to the building.

While Summers and Lahoti specifically chose Helgerson for her insight on how to integrate an art collection into a space without overwhelming each piece, she succeeds on the whole with her interpretation of a modern-meets-organic atmosphere. Helgerson's custom-designed furniture features flowing, wooden shapes with branch-like bases, and the light fixtures from Portland's Esque Studios reflect the tranquility

fluidity of the Japanese gardens.

Undoubtedly, as I explored the tasting room, I had a glass of wine in hand. Pinot Noir, of course.

Tony Rynders of Tendril Wines has been producing Saffron's estate Pinot Noirs since its first vintage in 2010. Lahoti and Summers met Rynders at the 2005 International Pinot Noir Festival in McMinnville. Since the first crush, case production has grown from 50 to 900 cases in 2012, and two acres of Chardonnay were planted last year, adding diversity in the vineyard.

Chris Berg of Roots Wine Company makes Saffron's vintage-inspired special bottlings such as Riesling. Berg has also been crafting Saffron Pinot Noir since 2010, but under his own label as a vineyard-designate wine. Roots and Tendril are also

ABOVE: A grouping of velvet couches offer a comfy place to relax with a glass of wine at Saffron Fields. Owners Sanjeev Lahoti and Angela Summers (standing) have displayed their impressive art collection for visitors to enjoy and experience. **BELOW:** Water is an important element at Saffron Fields, evoking a feeling of serenity, reminiscent of a Japanese garden.

joined by EIEIO in the production of single-vineyard Saffron Pinots under their respective brands and are available to sample in the tasting room.

In regard to the winery's showcase wine, Saffron Fields 2010 Pinot Noir, Paul Gregutt of Wine Enthusiast describes it best, "a lush mash-up of aromas running from mint to blackberry to cola. It's a wine of power and finesse that leads you down a most interesting flavor trail, with licorice and black tea dominating a long finish."

I knew the wines would be exceptional before I arrived on that October day, as I had tasted most of them months before. As you know, Lahoti and Summers are my neighbors, and as it turns out, Chris Berg is my husband. He, too, has been driving past Saffron every day with great anticipation.

If only we can talk the neighbors into hosting a block party of sorts. I imagine other nearby wineries such as WillaKenzie, Deux Vert, Lenné, Beacon Hill, Soléna and the newest of all the neighbors, Kendall Jackson, would be there, too. I volunteer to make the event signage, so those who want to join in the fun and fabulous wine can easily find Saffron — from the road.

Experience the tasting room for yourself at 18748 N.E. Laughlin Road, Yamhill. Hours are daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more details, call 503-662-5323 or visit www.saffronfields.com. A grand opening event is scheduled for Nov 23; check the website for information. ☺

