

# WINERY ARCHITECTURE TRENDS FOCUS ON AUTHENTICITY AND HOSPITALITY

SENSE OF PLACE AND CUSTOMIZED CUSTOMER  
EXPERIENCES ARE KEY FEATURES



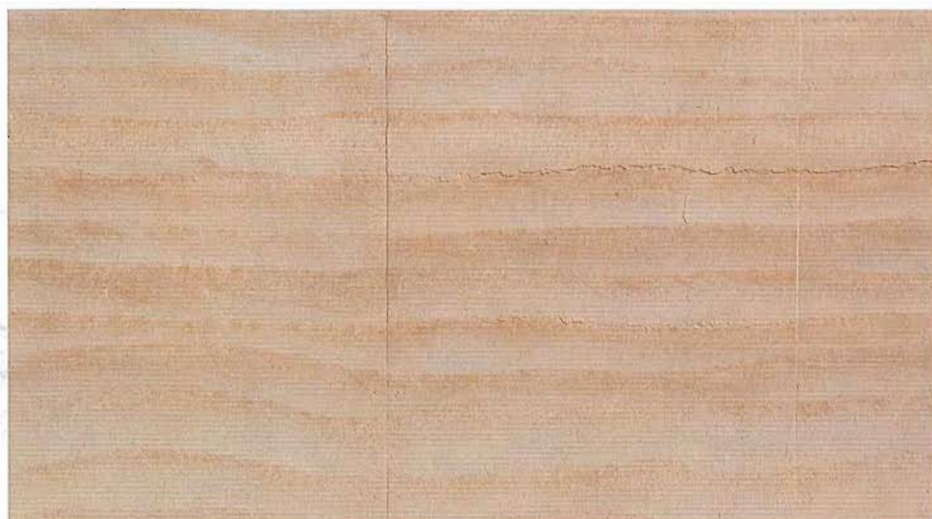
Wineries in the U.S. are no longer exclusively designed to look like Tuscan villas and French chateaux.



**T**he importance of designing wineries and tasting rooms to please visitors has never been so clear. Wine tourism is booming and the wineries that provide the most enjoyable visitor experiences are benefitting most from tourist dollars. Furthermore, direct-to-consumer sales of wine are accounting for greater revenues; it stands to reason that wineries bringing consumers through their tasting-room doors and giving them reasons to linger are the ones racking up the sales.

To learn about the latest architectural design trends and to get a look at some of the features wineries are adding to new projects, we talked to architects in California, Oregon, Washington state and Ohio.

In San Francisco, Calif., Douglas Thornley of Gould Evans Architecture works mostly with Napa Valley and Sonoma County wineries, although one of the firm's newest projects is to build the first tasting room in Tucson, Ariz. In Eugene, Ore., Richard Shugar of 2FORM Architecture recently completed his first Willamette Valley winery project, Saffron Fields, outside of Yamhill. In Seattle, Wash., Joe



This rammed-earth wall was made from soil at the winery site.

Chauncey, co-founder of Boxwood Designs, has projects in the state, as well as in British Columbia and Arizona. And in Fairlawn, Ohio, Melanie Friedman of FMD Architects has projects in her home state.

All agreed that the days of faux Tuscan villas overlooking American vineyards are gone. The point now is to express the winery's unique identity and location, to tell a story through design that will resonate with visitors who seek an emotional connection with the land and the wine.

As an example, Thornley described a rammed-earth wall built at a winery site, for which soil from the property was used – the same soil in which the grapes grow. The soil gave the wall its distinctive color and added a visual element that helped tell the winery's story.

"While a winery is essentially an industrial use for the production of wine," Thornley explained, "we have found that the owners want the hospitality areas to reflect the brand image of the winery. It's like their home."

## INCORPORATING HISTORY

Another way to do that is to incorporate buildings that are already part of the landscape. At Cuvaision Estate Wines in Napa Valley, Thornley integrated an old winemaker's office and lab into the new tasting room. Doing so not

only contributed to the project's sustainability, but provided a link to the winery's history.

Shugar said he was faced with the presence of an old barn that had

## AT A GLANCE

- + Wine tourism is booming and producers who provide the best visitor experiences stand to reap the most benefits.
- + The days of building faux French chateaux and Tuscan villas in the U.S. are over; instead, vintners want their buildings to be authentic to their regions.
- + Multiple hospitality areas are being created to provide different types of experiences.
- + Many new winery designs include kitchens for food and wine pairings.

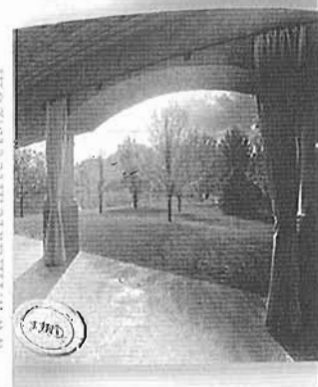
## Grain and Vine Design

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been in use long before the Saffron Fields tasting room was conceived. His solution was to recognize the part the barn played in the property's history by incorporating the reclaimed wood into his modern design. "When you look up at the ceiling, when you look outside, all of that wood is from the barn that was on that site," Shugar said.

the public tasting room so they can be opened together or separately, depending on the number of visitors. Thornley said he has placed VIP spaces in wine caves, production areas and tucked between the rows in secluded areas of vineyards.

Food also plays a larger role in tasting rooms these days. "Wine

and food pairing is a great way to sell wine," Chauncey said, and that translates into more or larger kitchen facilities at wineries. They can be anything from "a tiny kitchen that's got convection hot plates, a service sink and a refrigerator, to full-on restaurant-style kitchens," he said. "I can't think of a winery that we're working on that doesn't have food related to it."

Thornley agreed, saying, "We're putting commercial kitchens into almost all our projects."

Another trend is offering multiple venues for tastings, both inside and out. Some wineries create a secret garden environment within the vineyard. Thornley said he works with landscape architects to create pathways among the vines that lead to special tasting areas.

Friedman said a trend among Ohio wineries is to build an outdoor wedding pavilion that can double as a tasting space, such as at Gervasi Vineyards in Canton.

At Saffron Fields, Shugar found several ways to take visitors outdoors, both physically and visually. The tasting room, with glass on two sides, leads to an attrac-



An old barn was incorporated into the design of the Saffron Fields tasting room in the Willamette Valley.

Thornley noted that to be true to the "agrarian vernacular" of what are essentially grape farms, the design of wineries has moved away from one large building to a collection of smaller buildings. "We find that to be very effective in terms of having the winery relate to its site," he said. Using natural wood and stone also contributes to that.

Friedman said that in Ohio, where barns have long been part of the rural landscape, reclaimed wood from old structures resonates with visitors. "It just adds a talking point," she said.

## VIP SPACES

Incorporating special spaces for wine club and VIP members is important to enhance their experience and make them want to return. "The best way to provide that is through privacy," Thornley said. But as a practical measure, he situates private rooms next to



Cuvaion Estate Wines features a stylish private room for VIP tastings.



tive patio area with a pond and fire pit, and a window for ordering wine from the tasting bar. But Shugar didn't want to deprive anyone of the landscape views. Thus, instead of bottles or wine glasses lining the wall behind the tasting bar, there is a large window looking out on the vineyards and hillsides.

"I wanted to provide an opportunity for someone who's tasting the wine to really connect to the place," Shugar said, "so you have that direct relationship between what you're drinking and seeing."

Thornley also provides outdoor views and access for tasting room visitors. "In all our winery projects, we try to allow the tasting rooms to open up to an outdoor area," he said. "At Lynmar Estate (in Sebastopol, Calif.), we had 10-foot by 6-foot glass panels that slid into a pocket in the wall and essentially disappeared, opening up the tasting room to the courtyard. At Cuvaion, we took the sliding glass panels away so that space actu-



**The tasting room at Lynmar Estate was designed to open out into an outdoor courtyard.**

ally expands into the outdoor terrace. It gives a lot of flexibility for the wineries so that as they have more guests, they can open up. But primarily it's to invite the guests to sit outside among the vines and really enjoy a better visitor experience."

Added Friedman, "People are really tying the outside into their tasting rooms as much as they can with patios and balconies. Because when it gets nice in the Midwest, people just want to be outside."

Thornley also noted that production areas sometimes double as hospitality spaces. "We have a winery we're working on where the barrel room actually has a glass wall on the north side so you can view into it. They're planning on using it as one of their VIP tasting experiences. At Paraduxx Winery (in Napa), the fermentation room is a decagon, a building in the round, and it was very important for them to bring guests into the production area."

One of Shugar's challenges was to design a tast-

ing room that would also serve as a gallery for the owner's private art collection. The landscape architect, too, incorporated the owners' sculptures into the garden area.

Thornley said that in one of his new projects art and sculpture are integrated into the outdoor spaces. "When visitors arrive, for example, they'll be able to look through the building and see a sculpture and fountain beyond, as if it's telling them there are other places to go."

## SUSTAINABLE BUILDING

Although there was some resistance to sustainable farming and building practices in years past because of added costs, the practice is now widespread, Chauncey said. That's partly because of obvious benefits, such as the increased productivity of a healthier and happier workforce. The simple addition of natural lighting can make all the difference, he said.

"There have been numerous studies that show people are more creative in day-lit situations," Chauncey explained. "They have fewer sick days, they enjoy their jobs more. If you've got happier people, they're going to return more money to the bottom line because of their increased productivity."

On top of that, daylighting can cut energy costs for lighting by one- to two-thirds, he said. "So we're putting in more skylights, more clerestories, more north-facing glass doors, and allowing wineries to essentially function all day long without turning the lights on."

In warm climates, Thornley said, wineries are using night air to cool down their buildings naturally. "(And) we're building more caves. They typically use less energy to keep at a constant temperature than building a freestanding building." Architects are also using the earth as an insulator by pushing buildings into hills.

Thornley sites buildings to take advantage of solar exposure, but some wineries take full advantage by placing solar panels on their roofs. Cuvaion, for example, gets about 85% of its energy from solar panels. The winery's website ([www.cuvaion.com](http://www.cuvaion.com)) includes a live update of Cuvaion's solar-power generation.

Recalling all the wineries he visited as part of his research for the design of Saffron Fields, Shugar said, "I remember one winemaker saying, 'It's all about the wine.' I think others believe it's more than just the wine. It could be the artwork, it could be the experience, it could be about ceremony or about the environment they're in. There's a way of capturing that and the new wineries are realizing it."

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