

hospitality design

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growth spurts

nine destinations
to watch

HD expo
a hospitality design event

under the radar

california wine country



Whether it's tony Napa or laidback Sonoma Valley that beckons, Northern California's wine country has long enthralled visitors with its abundant supply of quality juice and a thriving artisanal food culture. Now a spate of posh hotels and design-forward tasting rooms is giving the region a glamorous boost. According to Lodging Econometrics, Napa Valley alone has nine hotel projects with nearly 1,100 rooms in the pipeline, seven of which are currently unbranded.

Coming Up

One of the most anticipated arrivals is Las Alcobas, part of Starwood Hotels' Luxury Collection. Opening later this year, the brand's second outpost (the first is in Mexico City's Polanco district) will be a renovation of the former Grandview Hotel & Spa overlooking the St. Helena vineyards.

"While the Las Alcobas locations differ in scale and architecture, they're both intimate hotels that feel very residential. The new one is designed to make you feel like you're at an inn versus a traditional hotel," says George Yabu, principal of Toronto- and New York-based Yabu Pushelberg, the firm responsible for both hotels' distinct looks.

"We wanted to design a retreat that fits contextually within the environment and

embodies easy living in a California setting," adds principal Glenn Pushelberg. "The look and feel of the property is natural and luxurious in quality, with rich linens and fine wools."

High-end style was also a priority for Craig and Kathryn Hall of Hall Wines when transforming their Napa B&B La Residence into the Senza hotel last fall. In addition to updating the rooms, Leslie Wilks, founder of St. Helena, California-based Leslie Wilks Design, dreamed up the Garden and Vineyard suites, which "have a subtle sizzle," she says. "The rooms were not meant to feel heavy but lighter and open for a place to let

go," she adds. Large mirrors leaning against walls act as "natural art in reflection," airy bathrooms flaunt stone pebble floors, and to encourage napping, slumber benches will soon be patio fixtures.

In Sonoma Valley, Forestville favorite the Farmhouse Inn recently underwent an \$8 million renovation—including nine new guestrooms and a ground-up spa—overseen by San Francisco-based SB Architects. Working with owners Joe and Catherine Bartolomei, president and principal Scott Lee says his team stayed true to the property's existing aesthetic through the use of crisp white architectural details and



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1. The tasting room at Hamel Family Wines, inspired by the nearby Mayacamas Mountains.

2. Private tasting room Winemaker's Den at Cairdean Estate features reclaimed oak siding from a Tennessee barn.



3. The tiled bar in Cairdean's main tasting room.

4. The dining area at City Winery's Napa outpost.

5. Farmhouse Inn's new spa references the horse stables that formerly existed on the property.



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Photo by BRUCE DAMONTE



creamy yellow board and batten siding. They also moved the parking from the interior to the edges of the site, “making the experience of the hotel a pedestrian journey through the landscape, which perfectly fits its peaceful setting.”

For Farmhouse Inn’s new spa, featuring a mix of corrugated tin, Carrara marble, and faux-wood plank flooring, nearby Healdsburg, California-based Myra Hoefler Interior Design tapped into the valley’s agricultural and equestrian history. “We wanted to create the feeling that the new building could have been an old horse stable that once existed on the property,” Hoefler says. “We even had an artist paint faint images of horses in each of the treatment rooms, as if the shadow of the horse in the stall still remained.”

Oenophile’s Choice

Wineries, of course, remain the region’s biggest star, and there are a number of newcomers. In Napa Valley, B Cellars Vineyards & Winery recently debuted in Oakville, while the iconic Stags’ Leap Winery, near Yountville, revamped its tasting room. And St. Helena’s vast new Cairdean Estate comprises vineyards, a winery, the Farmer & the Fox restaurant, Butterscots bakery and market, and the Redolent Mercantile retail shop.

Behind the Scottish Highland estate-inspired look—a nod to the client’s Scottish heritage—is San Francisco-based NICOLEHOLLIS, which also handled the interiors for Hall Wines’ new 30,000-square-foot winery complex in St. Helena. Hollis, principal and creative director, treated each Cairdean space as a room within a manor house, modeling the restaurant on a convivial British gastropub. “Community is important in Napa Valley. It is still a

rural, agriculturally focused place with longstanding traditions, and we wanted to embrace that,” she says. To fulfill the client’s desire for a “warm, simple, approachable” design, Hollis used white oak and black and white marble in the restaurant and market. These contrast with the concrete, darkened steel, and “touches of brass for sparkle to reflect the landscape of the Napa Valley” found in the winery. In the private tasting room, dubbed the Winemaker’s Den, walls are clad in reclaimed oak siding sourced from a Tennessee barn.

Hamel Family Wines, complete with a winery and hospitality center, ambitiously swooped into Sonoma last year. Doug Thornley, principal of Gould Evans’ San Francisco office, says that the Sonoma and Mayacamas Mountains were the design inspiration for the compound.

Rammed earth walls create two parallel planes that are integrated into the building, conjuring a figurative representation of the mountains, while also “structuring the experience of the building, grounding it in its specific place, and providing passive solar heating and cooling properties,” Thornley says. The walls, a rustic contrast to the slat-sized concrete panels in the Vintner’s Wing and the Estate House’s western red cedar, “organize circulation through the Estate House, linking a series of pavilion-like spaces and providing views all the way through from the entry terrace to a secret bosque of white ash trees beyond,” he adds.

Heading Downtown

Tastes of locally made chardonnay aren’t the only reason to pay a visit to wine country. Sleepy downtown Napa took a sophisticated turn when New York-based AvroKO designed the Thomas and Fagiani’s Bar—complete with a sexy rooftop—in a long-shuttered building in 2012. It is this same city that founder and CEO Michael Dorf chose for the third location of City Winery, set within the circa-1880s Napa Valley Opera House, which opened last spring. Followed by New York and Chicago locations (Nashville is the most recent city to boast a venue), Napa, according to Dorf, was a logical move. “We are very good promoters, so we decided it would be strategic to not make wine in Napa but rather promote the great winemakers and vineyards, which allows us to form a better relationship with them,” he says. If the 35 local wines on tap aren’t a potent reminder of the location, Dorf, who handles all design efforts, has also incorporated arched wooden doors and illuminated wine bottles for a country-meets-urban aesthetic.

Photo by JUSTINE DI FEDE