

PW

PRACTICAL WINERY & VINEYARD

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006

You said terroir?

*18 cover crop species
in North Coast vineyard*

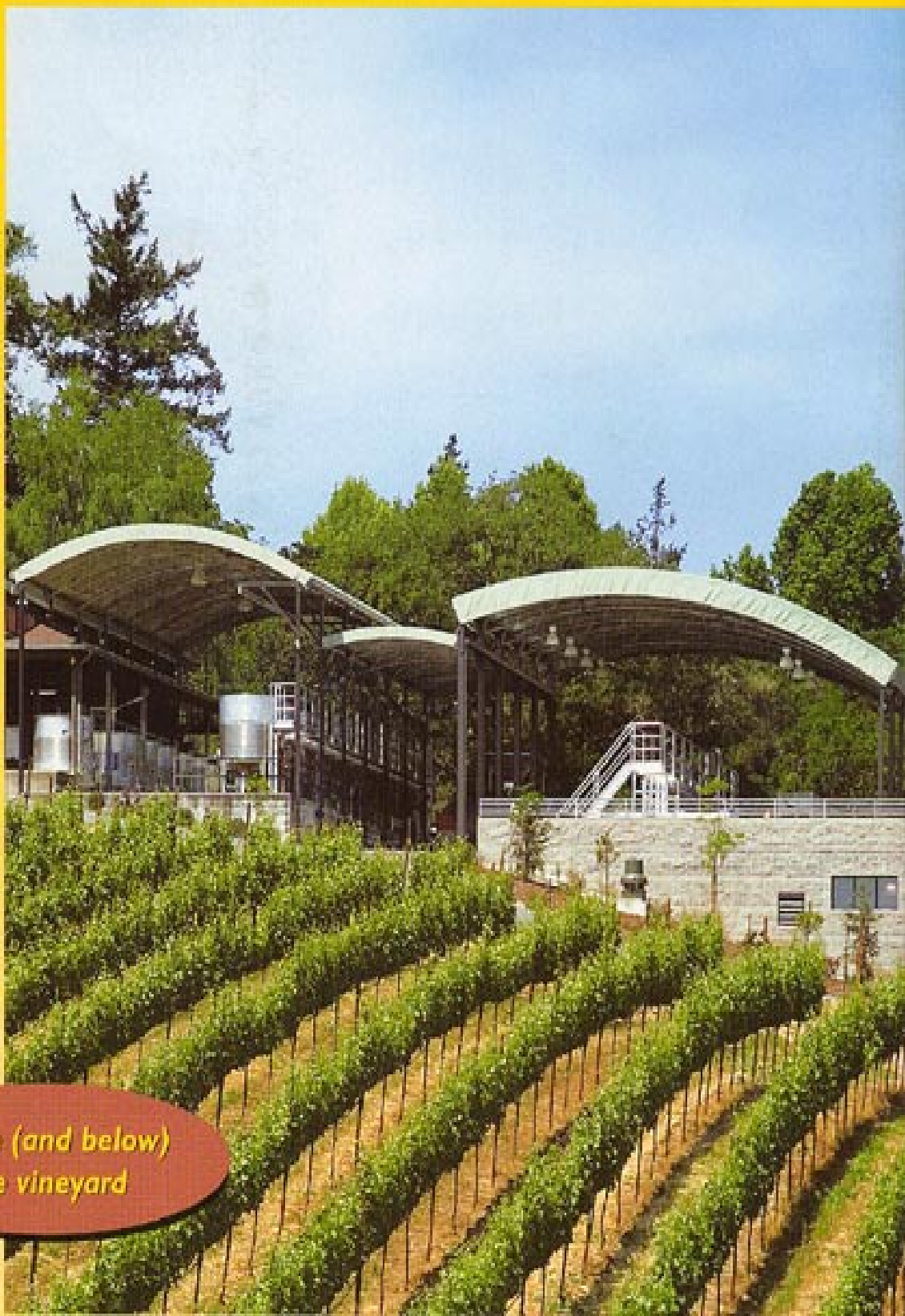
*Making wine shows/
festivals productive*

*Does wine really
pair with cheese?*

**SHOWCASE
PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES**

SMART VITICULTURE
*Wine growing to improve
Cabernet Sauvignon
quality*

*Above (and below)
the vineyard*





Integration of new and old: the new roof deck above the fermentation building has a capacity of 14 new open-top fermenters. Canvas roof structures span over the exterior work area providing an open feeling, minimizing the winery's impact on the surrounding vineyard.

ABOVE (and below) the vineyard

By Douglas Thornley, AIA

Wineries, by nature, can have a dual role. On the one hand, they have to efficiently transform bins of grapes into cases of filled bottles, a process that involves a great deal of sophisticated art and science. On the other hand, they may want to create a welcoming and pleasurable environment where visitors can taste, enjoy, learn about, and purchase wine.

When Lynmar Winery (located in Sonoma County's Russian River Valley), embarked on a five-year master plan to expand and enhance its facility, the focus was on navigating this duality while reflecting the nature of the region and the site and inviting visitors into the wine making process.

The Lynmar vineyard team completed the phased-replanting program at Quail Hill Vineyard this spring. The replanting program accounted for approximately 70 percent of the vineyard and took place from 1996 to 2005. Today, the vineyard is made up of 70 percent pinot noir (up from 55%) and 30 percent chardonnay, under-

scoring the team's conviction that this is a prime site for Russian River Valley Pinot Noir.

The Russian River Valley specialist of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay broke ground on the winery expansion, 9,000-square foot barrel aging caves, and a visitor center in October 2004. The construction project is part of the winery's investment plan that also includes a phased-replanting of its Quail Hill Vineyard estate, purchase of additional acreage in the region and the assemblage of a world-class winery and marketing team initiated in winter 2004.

"The completion of the expanded winery and caves marks a major milestone in Lynmar's development," said General Manager Larry Moraes. "The gravity-flow winery design reflects this team's commitment to produce world-class wines from our esteemed Quail Hill Vineyard estate. The integration of the winery into the hillside and the use of caves is also part of our commitment to integrate our facilities into the landscape of Sonoma County."

Lynmar applied the latest research

and advances in wine making available to create a wine maker's dream winery facility and barrel aging caves. The new multi-level expanded winery is outfitted with the most modern wine making equipment including double-jacketed fermentation tanks for precise temperature control, basket press for Pinot Noir, membrane press for Chardonnay, a complete lab and an oxygen-free bottling line to be added this winter. Further, the entire interior surfaces of the winery building are epoxy coated, ensuring a pristine environment for wine making. The caves



Visitors are treated with a spectacular view of the Quail Hill Vineyard at the visitor center tasting room.



The Lynmar Winery cave consists of seven bores (the longer shown above) that feature integral color shotcrete, ambient overhead and dramatic back lighting of the barrels, and a sloping "W" concrete floor with stainless steel floor drains.

provide an ideal, stable environment for aging and are accessible directly from the winery structure. Cooling and heating by section in the 9,000 square-foot cave allow the winery team to bring the temperatures as low as 52 degrees for long term aging and much higher to encourage native yeast fermentations. The entire winery project was designed to fit into the existing landscape and not to distract from the natural beauty of Sonoma's West County. Principles of Feng Shui were also employed to bring the site, its buildings, and wine caves into balance and harmony.

The companion hospitality center, set to open later this month, will offer Pinot and Chardonnay enthusiasts an unparalleled look at grape growing in the Russian River Valley.

"It's a wine maker's dream to be involved in designing a project of this magnitude, and we're very excited with the final result, especially with the enhanced capability to use gravity in the multi-level facility to minimize handling of the fruit," said wine maker Hugh Chappelle.

The winery and visitor center were designed by San Francisco-based architectural firm Baum-Thornley Architects LLP. The barrel-aging caves were constructed by Magorian Mine Services, and Expert Alex Stark of New York conducted the Feng Shui assessment.

Owner Lynn Fritz bought the 42-acre

Quail Hill Vineyard in 1980 and founded Lynmar Winery in 1990 to focus on estate-grown Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

In addition to being winery owner, Fritz was also chairman and CEO of the global logistics firm Fritz Companies, until it was acquired by UPS in 2001. That same year, Fritz founded the Fritz Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing private sector expertise in logistics to support humanitarian organizations all over the world.

The expansion project had to accommodate an additional role that most wineries do not have. The new visitor facility had to host seminars and conferences related to the organization's work, seating both small and large groups. At the same time, when the public came for tasting, the winery had to present an image of intimacy and elegance.

The expansion project involved adding a visitor center, enlarging the existing winery, and creating a new 9000-square foot wine cave. Because the winery focuses on producing wine that reflects the character of the Russian River Valley appellation and the terroir of Quail Hill Vineyard, Fritz wanted the new buildings to reflect the warmth and friendliness the region is known for. Unpretentious took preference over iconic — the winery had to fit comfortably into the Sonoma landscape. Feng Shui was part of this effort.

Inviting visitors

The visitor center reflects the character of a comfortable home. The wood, stone, and board-and-batten finish were inspired by the barns and stables common throughout the region.

To separate public and support spaces, the gabled structure housing the public areas has vertical siding stained sage green. Support spaces, including conference, kitchen, and office spaces, are clad in dark gray board-and-batten siding, to serve as neutral backdrop for public spaces.

Inside, to create the required flexibility, a series of rooms open onto each other with sliding panels. In addition, they open out onto a courtyard, where tastings and other events occur. A stone seating wall, with stones similar in color to the dark earth tones of the native soil, defines the courtyard. The conference room's fireplace is made of the same stone. The flooring of the public area consists of two-foot-square copper gray slate, both in the interior and courtyard, reinforcing the indoor/outdoor nature of the design. The overall effect is earthen and rustic.

To provide visitors with the best possible experience, the building was sited strategically with views to a Pinot Noir vineyard to the south and a Chardonnay vineyard to the east. The form of the visitor center was devised to take advantage of these views.



New fermentation building under construction. Direct access to the wine cave can be seen in the lower left had corner. The existing winery is higher on the hill. Below, a section of the caves under the canopy buildings.

Landscaping supports the overall design also. Instead of a lawn or shrubs, the vineyards serve as the main landscape component, creating a more authentic visitor experience. As visitors approach, a swath of perennials alongside the path leads the eye to the entry.

An adjacent demonstration vineyard introduces visitors to the wine making process. A path from the visitor center to the winery leads up a gentle slope to the new wine making facility and the wine cave, where tours provide an up-close view of the work that goes into producing world-class wine.

Exposing the process

The new winery structure is nestled against a hill, just downhill from the original wine making building, to accommodate a gravity-flow process. The intent was to create a structure that would not be obtrusive in the landscape.

From the main entry, visitors cannot see the building, so the vineyard remains the main focus. As visitors walk along the path from the visitor's center, a guide can explain the wine making process.

To reduce construction costs and provide a more human-scaled environment, the wine maker's office, laboratory, technical tasting room, and bottling area are located in a distinct structure rather than incorporated into the fermentation building. This board-and-batten massing wraps around the new winery building and is the first building visitors see on approaching

from the visitor's center, with a roof-deck canopy visible beyond. This mix of massing allows what could typically be a large-scale structure to fit within the context of a rural residential environment.

Cave for barrel ageing

Caves provide a cost-effective way to store wine. Temperatures in the Russian River Valley can rise as high as 90°F. Regardless of the exterior temperature, caves have naturally constant humidity and temperature—about 58°F, an ideal temperature for storing wine.

Caves are also environmentally friendly. They require fewer construction materials than an above-ground building. This made a lot of sense for Lynmar, which relies on sustainable and organic agricultural principles in its growing practices. Another reason to add a cave is that they

simply have a romantic ambiance that delights visitors.

Caves can nevertheless have a negative impact on the energy of the land. To avert this possibility, specially designed feng shui cures were introduced into the caves.

While most caves are linear in their layout, one "bone" at Lynmar is curved to provide structural stability and a unique visual experience.

Overall, the intent of the design was to emphasize honest expression, matching the same commitment to authenticity with which the wine is made. The facilities reflect the winery's double role, to complete the alchemy that changes grapes into wine while providing visitors with a pleasant experience. But more than that, by explaining the process and making it clearly visible to visitor, Lynmar bridges the two worlds.

