

california

HOME+DESIGN

HOLIDAY AFFAIRS TO REMEMBER ENTERTAINING SPACES

GREENBRAE
A HOUSE FOR
ALL SEASONS

RUTHERFORD
CELEBRATING
THE HARVEST

LOS ANGELES
A FAMILY
PORTRAIT



Ken Fulk n
a glass b
new year
St. H
barn, J

FULL CIRCLE

A family of winegrowers creates a new destination in Rutherford, where the fruits of the harvest can be enjoyed in a setting designed to feel like home.

BY LYDIA LEE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEN SISKI

Napa's newest independent winery, Round Pond Estate, is also one of the better places to get a bird's eye view of the valley. The second-floor tasting terrace offers vistas of the Mayacamas Mountains to the west, while the rockier Vaca range lies to the east. Here, the MacDonnell family has been growing grapes for more than 25 years.

Back in 1983, Bob and Jannine MacDonnell purchased 28 acres in Rutherford, naming the place after Bob's favorite childhood hangout, a lake in New York called Round Pond. They supplied grapes to many well-known labels, including Grgich Hills and BV, and eventually expanded their vineyards to more than 350 acres.

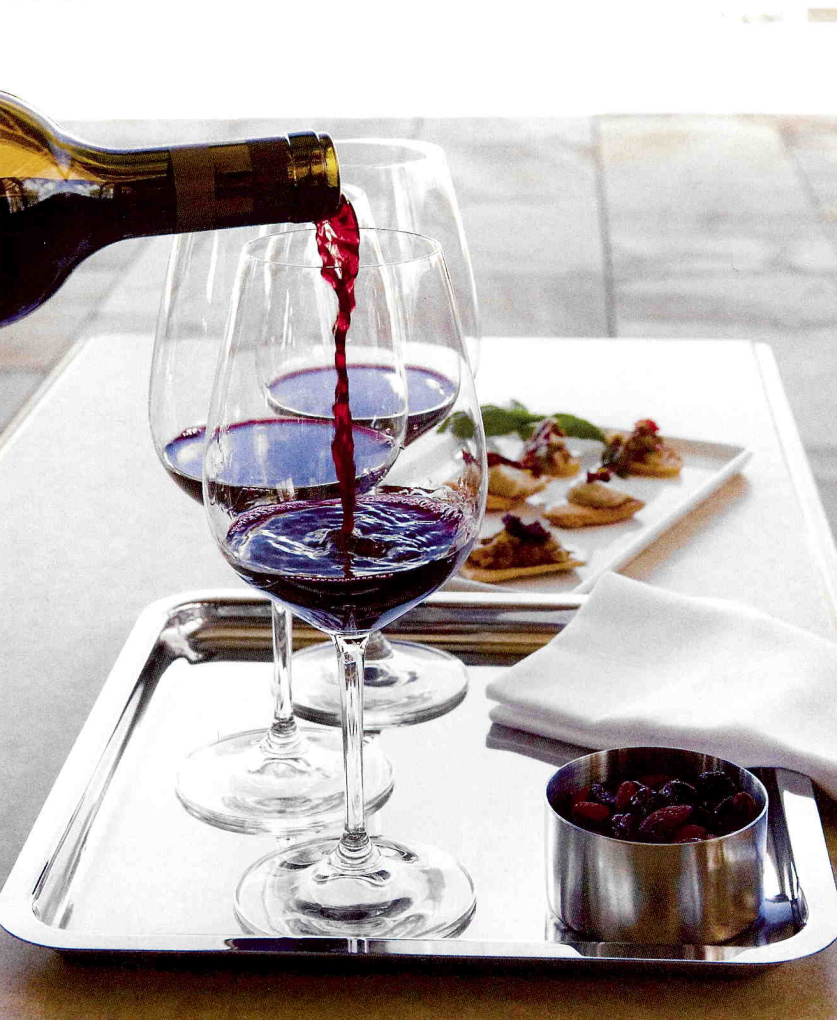
Meanwhile, the temptation to tinker with their own vintages proved irresistible. "It was back in the early '90s, and we made one barrel of Cab in the worst possible conditions: inside a metal tractor shed that got up to 100 degrees," says Miles MacDonnell, Bob's son. "I don't remember how it tasted, but I was still a teenager, so I was probably more interested in the quantity than the quality!"

After that first batch of "Tractor Shed Red," as the family dubbed it, they were hooked. By 1997, the MacDonnells were making 150 cases to drink and give away as gifts. They were also experimenting



OPPOSITE: Over 25 years, the Round Pond vineyards have expanded to more than 350 acres. CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The latest addition is a new winery, with a barrel room on the first floor; the second-floor terrace overlooks the grapevines; a distinctive "keyhole" door greets visitors to the winery; an olive oil tasting at Round Pond's olive mill.





with olive oil, after replacing 12 acres of unproductive grapevines with mature olive trees imported from Italy and Spain.


In 2001, Miles and his sister, Ryan, started talking about taking the next step—making wine and olive oil under their own label. “It seemed like a natural progression,” says Ryan. “As the second generation, we wanted to do something a little different.” A couple years later, she decided to build Round Pond’s own olive mill, transforming the old tractor shed into a spotless industrial space gleaming with Italian stainless steel equipment.

Meanwhile, Miles focused on winemaking, hoping to improve the family’s grape-growing business by putting their fruit under closer scrutiny. The first Round Pond vintage was produced in 2002 at a neighboring winery. “We thought it tasted good, but we knew we were going to have to wait for it to age for three years,” says Miles. “It was very nerve-racking.” In the meantime, he and Ryan began contemplating a modest facility—a “metal barn, where we could produce maybe 3,000 cases.”

As the planning progressed, the barn morphed into a more substantial space—one that could accommodate up to 8,500 cases and the public with a tasting area and a commercial kitchen. To design the winery, the MacDonnells turned to San Francisco’s Walker & Moody Architects and Chicago-based interior design firm Gregga Jordan Smieszny.

ABOVE LEFT: The winery’s seasonal food pairings feature produce from Round Pond’s three-acre biodynamic garden. ABOVE: Miles MacDonnell checks on a tank of wine. LEFT: Ryan MacDonnell is the family’s olive oil expert: “A good, fresh oil will have a very distinctive flavor.”

“We knew we didn’t want something pretentious,” says Miles. Architect Sandy Walker began by touring the area’s old stone wineries. Hewing to their simple lines and sharply pitched roofs, he looked for other ways



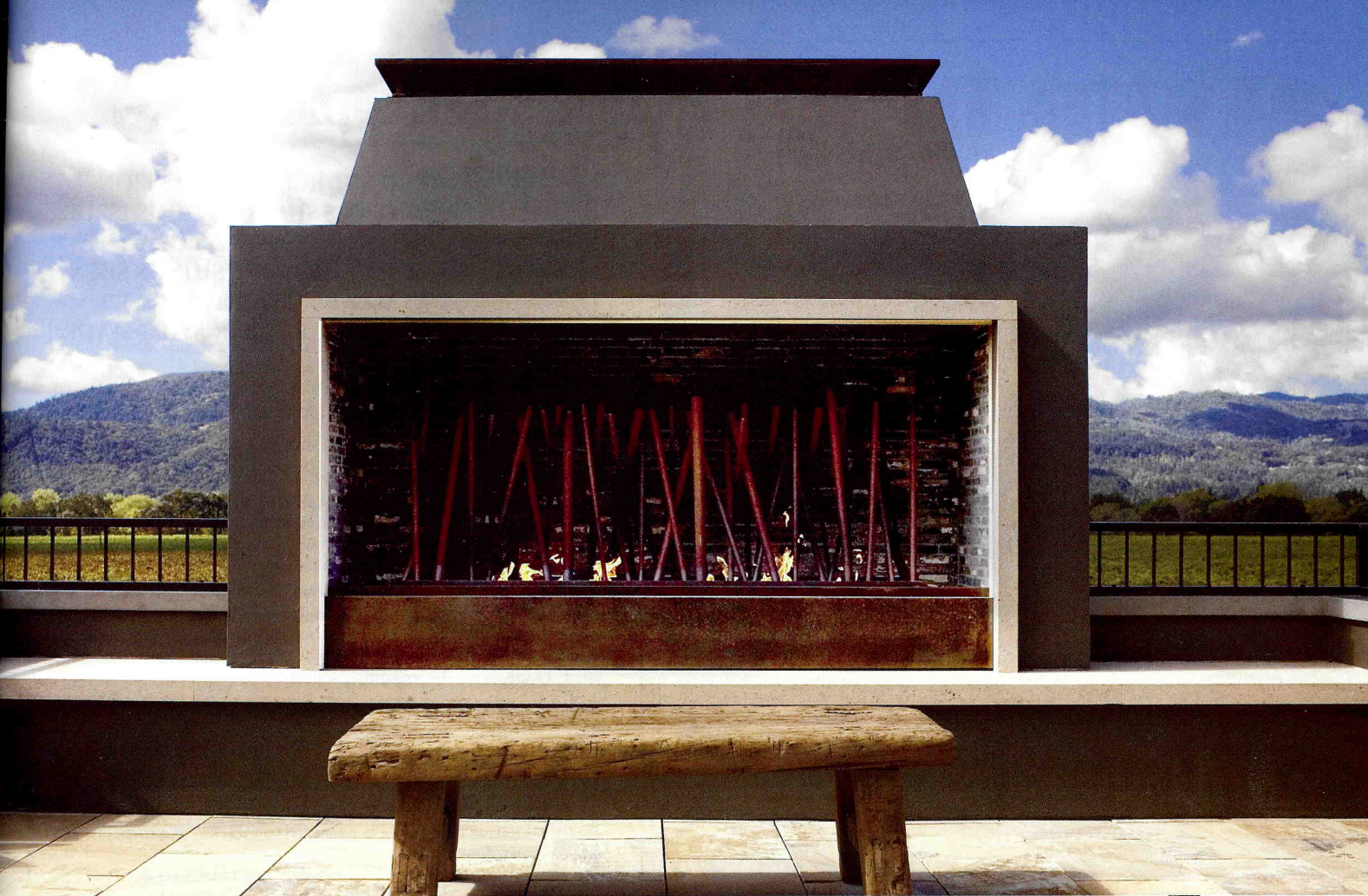
Designer Stephan Jones made sure to provide a variety of seating options in the tasting lounge. He included tea-height tables in the mix. "They're taller than cocktail tables but shorter than dining tables, so you can put your wineglass down easily."

"We wanted to create a place with the feel of a living room, where people could hang out and relax."



*"The idea was to find things that had character
and a certain amount of toughness to them."*

The fossil-stone floor in the interior continues out onto the expansive outdoor terrace, contributing to a sense of continuity. A pleasing juxtaposition of old and new, a reclaimed-teak dining table is paired with aluminum-framed chairs from Janus et Cie.



ABOVE: With its limestone border, the concrete fireplace has a formal quality. The hearth's sculptural iron bars were inspired by grapevines. RIGHT: Surrounded by vineyards, the Round Pond winery is at the end of a half-mile allée of palms.

to “do something distinctive.” Walker designed a large round window over a glass-paneled door—an immense “keyhole” that he fine-tuned up to the last minute. “The framing was up, and when you looked through the window, you could see that it was cutting off the tops of the palm trees lining the approach,” says Walker. “So we reworked the design to get a better view.”

Indeed, Round Pond is all about the views. The tasting lounge is centered around an atrium that looks down into the first-floor barrel room. To one side is a freestanding bar, and across from the bar is a partially covered terrace with a stately fireplace. “We wanted to create a place with the feel of a living room, where people could hang out and relax,” says Ryan. The outdoor terrace is nearly the same size as the lounge. “You get the sense that you’re floating above the vineyards,” says project architect Joel Baumgardner.

Throughout the interiors, heavy timber beams and plaster walls create a sense of rustic simplicity. “We wanted the space to have a certain industrial feel, so we used raw and scrubbed-looking materials to set the background,” says designer Stephan Jones, who worked at Gregga Jordan Smieszny at the time (and has since gone solo). Many of the furnishings are made out of reclaimed wood. “The idea was to find things that had character and a certain amount of toughness to them,” says Jones.

At the end of the year, after the grapes and olives have been harvested, the pace at Round Pond slows down. “It’s my favorite time of year,” says Miles. “I’m looking forward to hanging out by the outdoor fireplace with a glass of wine.” ■

