

PRESS DEMOCRAT FOOD+WINE



CADE Winery, Gavin Newsom's latest entry into the wine world, sits on Howell Mountain.

Gavin's Quest



Photos by MARK ARONOFF / The Press Democrat

Contributing to the green designation at CADE is the use of recycled materials. The steel table in the wine cave was recycled from a submarine.

SF mayor stakes new claim with CADE Winery

By VIRGINIE BOONE
FOR THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Gavin Newsom looks forward to being the future ex-governor of California.

As he tours the state touting his bid for the 2010 election, behind the scenes he's laying the groundwork for his longer-term future as a Napa Valley vintner, a role he's quietly dabbled in for years as part of the team behind the successful PlumpJack Winery in Oakville.

"I started in a wine store," Newsom said, "and I love the wine industry. It's my passion, it's complementary. I can be more authentic in my public life because I have a private life I love, cherish, embrace and that

fulfills me. Politics ends."

The PlumpJack team — Newsom, Gordon Getty and general manager John Conover along with winemaker Anthony Biagi and consulting winemaker Nils Venge — has just upped the ante, opening CADE Winery atop Howell Mountain.

Their hope is that CADE — striving for LEED certification for its buildings and organic certification for its vineyards — will be a sustainable showcase for the team's new slate of mountain-grown wines and also for the appellation, exalted for its brawny reds full of big tannins and chewy mountain fruit.

But as a place to visit? Up that winding, confusing road eastward and up from Silverado Trail? Maybe

not so much.

"The idea was to contribute a new idea in a new part of the valley with the context that there were a few neighbors across the way that had been doing some things," Newsom said. "But we've taken a little risk up here, because you never know."

It was imperative to Newsom that if he was going to be involved in building a new winery, especially in a part of the Napa Valley treasured for its still-wild nature, it had to be LEED. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a certification process for building sustainably — using sustainable materials, taking into account water and

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GAVIN NEWSOM

The San Francisco mayor, who recently announced he will make a run for governor in 2010, believes his CADE Winery can be an important addition to the Napa area.

CADE: Sustainability at the forefront of Newsom's new project

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energy use, improving air quality, reducing solid waste.

"We've always tried to distinguish ourselves through values," said Newsom. "One of the values is sustainability. It's about expressing your values through your business and walking your talk, especially as I'm preaching all over the state about sustainability."

At CADE, there's a 9,000-square-foot winery connected to a network of caves totaling 15,000 square feet (used for barrel storage) and an adjacent administration building with offices, a courtyard, lounge and kitchen. In CADE's case achieving LEED certification includes the use of recycled blue jeans for insulation and plug-in parking spots for electric cars.

"The reality is society is subsidizing all of us, our wineries, our construction and practices," said Newsom, about wanting to build sustainably. "I don't think that's inherently right. We have to be accountable to what we produce."

Getting the buildings and the vineyards right was important. But of equal importance was making great wines at fair prices, something PlumpJack has done since its inception, pleasing the crowds. Part of the equation included taming Howell Mountain fruit, and that just added to the challenge.

"We really tried to make a wine that reflected terroir, a sense of site," said Conover. "There are a lot of good red wines, wines that are just oaky and rich and decadent but don't taste like the areas in which they're made. Our Howell Mountain cab tastes like Howell Mountain. There's structure and tension."

Critic Robert Parker already agrees, giving five new CADE wines, several of which have yet to be released, scores of between 90 and 94 (out of 100), detailing in his Wine Advocate

MOUNTAIN MAGIC

What: CADE Winery

When: Open for tours and tastings by appointment

Where: 360 Howell Mountain Road South, Angwin

Information: 965-2746, www.cadewinery.com

Current CADE Wines:

2007 CADE Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$26). Aromas of green melon, wet stones, cantaloupe, cut grass and vanilla bean followed by flavors of guava, rose petal, gooseberry and vanilla. The 14 percent semillon fleshes out the mid palate and adds a nice layer to the finish.

2006 CADE Napa Cuvée Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60). Sourced from some of the premier vineyards in Napa Valley, including To-Kalon, Inkgrade and Dr. Crane, the Cuvée is deep, dark, dense and luscious with aromas of blackberry, currant, anise and vanilla. With aeration, secondary aromas of plum, cedar and soy develop. On the palate, flavors of blackberry, boysenberry, black olive and raspberry are framed by polished tannin. The finish is smooth and lush with just a hint of tannin.

2005 CADE Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$64). 100 percent Howell Mountain and the first Howell Mountain cabernet sauvignon released by CADE Winery. This wine is from a selection of vineyards owned by small artisan growers from throughout the Howell Mountain appellation. The final blend was chosen from 16 of the top 2005 barrels, representing a blend of 88 percent cabernet sauvignon and 12 percent merlot.

newsletter that, "the 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (from Howell Mountain) reveals excellent potential."

CADE's 21 acres of vineyards get sun all day on a 54-acre, southwest-facing, strikingly-sloped piece of land Newsom and Conover bought from Pacific Union College, the Seventh-day Adventist tenant most associated with the tiny town of Angwin.

Its soils are red and rich in iron. Planted are 19 acres of cabernet sauvignon and two of merlot, in straight rows double the vine density of those put in years ago at PlumpJack on the valley floor. The first CADE vines were harvested in 2006 and are already at a healthy three tons to the acre, impressive yields for mountain fruit.

Unlike PlumpJack, which makes only estate-grown wines, CADE also gives the partners an opportunity to work with vineyards from around the Napa Valley. Their

good reputation preceding them, growers have been lining up for years to try to sell grapes to Conover, who now welcomes the chance to say yes to fruit from vineyards like Beckstoffer, To-Kalon, Dr. Crane, Inkgrade and Kenefick Ranch, all coveted sources.

The result are 2006 and 2007 Napa Cuvées, blends from these vineyards, and a finished Howell Mountain wine sourced with the help of neighboring growers until CADE's vineyards truly come in.

The views? On a clear day, they extend all the way to Mount Diablo. The grounds are dotted with cool-skinned manzanita trees (the CADE winery logo), and to say the location is a touch wild is to understate.

"When we first came up here we were sitting on boulders the size of Volkswagens, surrounded by rattlesnakes," Conover recalls, looking knowingly at his friend Newsom.

"Rattlesnake Randy comes up here once a year. We pay him 10 bucks a snake, he harvests 20 to 30 snakes every summer up here. He wears chaps in case."

It was on that same night on those boulders that Newsom stated his desire to go LEED, a term Conover fully admits he thought "was a Chinese word or something."

Not sure even where to start, they found an unlikely champion in Juan Carlos Fernandez of Lail Design Group.

"Here was a 38-year-old guy from Guadalajara (who) had designed a bus stop and a guest house," said Conover. "He didn't have anything significant under his belt but we're not averse to risk-taking. It was kind of a roll of the dice with Carlos, but he's delivered."

A month after opening, CADE is getting it all right. From the sunlit-filled tasting room to the killer views, to the manzanita-surrounded winery and stellar, shockingly affordable (for Napa) wines, it's all a testament to its founders and the principles by which they've always operated.

"Great people and great grapes, that's what you need to make great wine," said Conover. "When people buy PlumpJack and now CADE they rarely ask what's the vintage. It's gotten to that point because we deliver year in and year out."

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