

PlumpJack expands reach with Cade Winery

By Paul Franson
FOR THE STAR

Not content with its PlumpJack winery in Oakville, the PlumpJack Group has built a second winery in Angwin on Howell Mountain.

The winery's proprietors are San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom and composer and financier Gordon Getty, and the general manager and partner is John Conover, who also manages PlumpJack winery. The name Cade referred to a cask or barrel in Shakespeare's time; the company is fond of Shakespearean terms such as PlumpJack and Falstaff. The winemaker is Anthony Biagi, who is also

the winemaker at PlumpJack, while Nils Venge is the consulting winemaker.

Why two wineries?

Conover said the group is a big believer in estate wines (those from a winery's own vineyards) and couldn't plant more grapes in Oakville. "We were maxed out at PlumpJack," said Conover. Then the Cade property became available. "We were a big fan of Howell Mountain wines, and this seemed like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Cade wines, being from Howell Mountain, will be bigger — more tannic and intense — than the mellower wines from PlumpJack. "Oakville wines are lush and juicy with

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John Conover

black fruit flavors. The Howell Mountain wines are more reserved, more Old World in style with pencil lead and cedar flavors and fine, granular tannins."

The vineyard

Cade Winery is about 12 miles from PlumpJack Winery on a 54-acre hillside property nearly 1,800 feet high just as you drop into the village of Angwin in the Howell Mountain appellation of the larger Napa Valley American Viti-

cultural Area.

It contains 21 acres of vines planted on a rocky, well-drained hillside facing southwest at nearly 1,800 feet in elevation: 19 acres of cabernet sauvignon, clones 7, 4, 169 and 337 were planted on 3309, 420, 420 and 1014 rootstocks in 2003.

The vineyard also includes two acres of merlot grapes clone 181 on rootstock 330.

The winery will farm the vines organically. The vineyard manager is Dave Pirio.

The winery

The development of Cade Winery began in June 2006 with the construction of a nearly 15,000 square-foot cave. It represents an investment of about \$2 million of the total of \$12 million in the winery. The cave is curved, and from above, it takes the shape of the PlumpJack shield — though not by design, claims Conover.

The cave was dug by famed local mole Alf Burlson, and Conover said was a "dream construction." The tufa loam was perfect for digging and Burlson was able to dig 20 to 30 feet a day instead of the usual 12 to 14.

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Submitted photos

LEFT: The Cade Winery, located at 1,800 feet elevation on Howell Mountain near Angwin, is owned by the PlumpJack Group. Its 54 acres includes 21 planted in cabernet and merlot vines. Winery GM John Conover just released a 2006 sauvignon blanc. RIGHT: Cade Winery includes a 6,700-square-foot production facility, a 15,000-square-foot cave and soon will include an administration building that will be 5,000 square feet. The winery cost some \$12 million, which doesn't include the administration building.

Winery

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It required no reinforcing; there's no wood in the cave except the barrels, a precaution against TCA contamination. Even the concrete barrel supports were poured in place.

The adjoining open production facility was designed by architect Juan Carlos Fernandez of Lail Design Group in St. Helena and completed in time for the 2007 harvest.

The winery building was built on a site with a 38-

degree slope to minimize the footprint, said Conover.

The 6,700-square-foot production facility is LEED certified by the U.S. Green Building Council. The project's green goals and design strategies include energy savings of at least 21 percent beyond California's Title 24 energy code requirements, solar energy harvesting to meet 25 percent of the building's energy demand, the use of FSC certified wood and recycled-content and low-emitting materials, and the recycling of at least 50 percent of the construction waste to divert it from landfill.

It uses 20 percent recycled potash in the concrete and 85 percent recycled rebar. It has a 60,000-gallon water tank built into the walls for fire protection. Simon & Associates helped with the environmental planning.

A 5,000-square-foot administrative building with offices, a small lounge and a kitchen are under construction and should be finished this summer.

PlumpJack Group also intends to install solar power at Cade Winery.

The winery contractor was Grassi Construction, Inc. of Napa and the interior design of the office and tasting facil-

ity was by Shopworks Design, also of Napa.

The wines

Cade's first release is the 2006 Cade sauvignon blanc and its first cabernet sauvignon will be available in the spring.

The sauvignon blanc is priced at \$26 per bottle and produced from grapes grown in Oakville and Rutherford, not on Howell Mountain.

Cade will ultimately produce two cabernet sauvignons, a Howell Mountain cabernet from purchased grapes for release this year, followed by an estate Howell Mountain cabernet in 2009.

Total production is expected at 4,000 to 5,000 cases.

Winemaker Anthony Biagi has been making wine as a business for more than a decade, but started helping friends who owned a vineyard and winery in Lodi when he was 10. Upon receiving his degree in fermentation science from the University of California at Davis, he became enologist with Duckhorn Vineyards, then was named assistant winemaker and then Paradoxx winemaker. He then became winemaker/general manager at Neal Family Vineyards and joined PlumpJack family in the winter of 2003.

Consulting winemaker Nils Venge has been a nationally-known vintner for more than three decades. His 1985 Groth Reserve cabernet earned a 100-point rating from Robert Parker Jr. — the only perfect score ever awarded to an American winery.

Details

Cade Winery is at 360 Howell Mountain Road South in Angwin. The phone number (at PlumpJack) is 945-1220 and the Web site is www.cadewinery.com.

Tours and tastings are by appointment only but you can also taste the Cade wines at PlumpJack in Oakville.