

Eco-Savvy Sipping

Local wine enthusiasts are an eco-savvy set. They drive their hybrids or bike through the Santa Barbara Wine Country to seek out and sample wines made from organically or biodynamically grown grapes. So it's no surprise that sustainable sipping has now come full circle to green tasting rooms. Forget interiors splashed with celadon, jade, or sage, these state-of-the-art structures reflect a conscious decision to reduce, reuse, and recycle in every facet of design and construction. Santa Ynez-based Shannon Scott Design and Santa Barbara architectural firm Allen Associates have recently collaborated on two watershed wine tasting venues in Los Olivos.

"Commercially, it is now simpler than ever to be green," says Scott, an award-winning interior designer and committed environmental advocate focused on earth-friendly furnishings, textiles, and design. "I was amazed at how easy it was to do these projects."

At The Bench, reclaimed teak flooring, salvaged oak beams for the bar, a heating and air-conditioning system that runs at 94 percent efficiency, use of glues and paints with low- to zero-volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, and furniture upholstered

with soy foam are just a few of the eco-conscious touches.

The green grade for Stolpman Vineyards Tasting Room is even higher. "We basically deconstructed a 100-year-old house and either resold, recycled, or donated to Habitat for Humanity the scrap and excess building materials," explains John Mathews, project manager for Allen Associates.

Mathews, who has been known to "dumpster dive" on occasion for viable materials, exemplifies the commitment to conservation of those involved.

"It's all about up-front planning and controlling the waste stream."

Natural linoleum made from linseed oil in the bathroom, reclaimed rubber behind the counter, LED lighting that may last 30 years, formaldehyde-free insulation, and wood approved by the Forest Stewardship Council for sustainable growth are some of the bar-raising green resources inside. With über-upscale results, both locations set a new standard for sophisticated construction and presentation.

More than mere baby steps on the path to preservation, green tasting rooms represent a giant leap in reducing the wine world's carbon footprint. And that's always in good taste.

 VIJU MATHEW



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