



Ma(i)sonry

BLACKBIRD'S NEW NEST

Ma(i)sonry, Yountville's new art-gallery-cum-wine-tasting-salon, defines itself as "a life aesthetic." It's also a historic, 1904 stone manor with lovely landscaped gardens that serves as one of the only places in Napa Valley where you can sample Blackbird Vineyards' Pomerol-inspired Merlot blends, along with select wines from several other artisanal wineries, including Lail Vineyards, Pedras Wine Company, Renteria Wines, Brown Estate, and Joel Gott Wines. Three intimate tasting rooms, two great rooms, and a sculpture-strewn outdoor area for sipping and nibbling are open to the public daily, as well as to groups for select private events. Inside, antiques mingle with contemporary furnishings and art by local and international designers such as Ron Mann and Alexandra von Furstenberg. Ma(i)sonry is the brainchild of Blackbird Vineyards' owner Michael Polenske, who envisioned it as a way to bring all his passions under one roof. In addition to the winery, Polenske has an interest in several Bay Area restaurants and is the former owner of a San Francisco antiques gallery. "Ma(i)sonry brings together world-class art, artisan wines, culture, and furnishings under one roof in a 'living gallery' concept that is unique to the Napa Valley," says Polenske. "We are excited to be a part of the renaissance taking place in the northern part of Yountville." *For more information, go to www.maisonry.com.*

HERE COMES THE SUN

In the wine industry, where livelihoods depend so much on the whims of weather, global warming is far more than just an idle threat. So rather than wait for tax breaks and the mainstreaming of green technology, wineries are increasingly deciding to lead by example. Last spring, Far Niente installed the first-ever "Floatovoltaic" system at its Oakville winery, attaching nearly 1,000 solar panels to pontoons and floating them on the winery's vineyard irrigation pond. In the process, it managed to not only generate about 400 kilowatts of power—enough to provide for all of its electrical needs and produce a net-zero energy bill—but also preserve three-quarters of an acre of valuable cabernet vineyards that would have been torn out for a land-mounted array.

"We recognize that our environment is facing significant challenges, and as an agriculture-based business we have an obligation to do our part and take sustainable measures where possible," says partner Larry Maguire. Far Niente, along with its sister wineries, Nickel & Nickel and Dolce, also employs sustainable practices in its vineyards, including powering vehicles with biodiesel, recycling, and farming organically. Maguire says that the switch to solar power wasn't for financial reasons. "My partners and I felt it was the right thing to do from a social perspective." *For information, go to www.farniente.com.*

