

Wine Spectator

PlumpJack Achieves Gold LEED Certification for Napa's Odette Winery

The hospitality company designed its winery to meet high environmental standards; believes it will pay off with consumers

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Photo by: Courtesy PlumpJack Group

Odette winemaker Jeff Owens stands atop his winery, with enough solar panels to power the facility year-round.

What do you do after building one of the world's most energy-efficient wineries? Build another one. That was the philosophy of PlumpJack Group, the hospitality company cofounded by California Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom and billionaire philanthropist Gordon Getty. In an exclusive to *Wine Spectator*, PlumpJack has just announced that their

Odette Estate Winery in Napa Valley's Stags Leap District has officially earned a Gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. The certification is the culmination of more than four years of work designing and building an environmentally friendly facility.

This is the second winery in the PlumpJack Group to earn Gold certification; their first was **Cade Estate Winery**.

Since its introduction in 1998, LEED has become **an international benchmark** for buildings that are better for the environment and for the wellbeing of the people who live or work within them. Points are awarded **across a variety of categories**, including use of renewable energy, water efficiency, innovation in design and more. Beyond the basic LEED certification are the Silver, Gold and Platinum levels. (Fellow Napa Valley winery **Silver Oak** became the first commercial production winery in the world to reach Platinum, in 2016.)

After **purchasing Steltzner Vineyards** (the property that would become Odette) in 2012, the PlumpJack team set out to build not just an eco-friendly winery, but a Gold LEED certified one. "It was our goal from the start," PlumpJack partner and general manager John Conover told *Wine Spectator*. "If you're building from scratch, I don't know why you wouldn't want to." Working alongside architect Juan Carlos Fernandez, who also designed Cade, they came up with innovative ways to build an energy-efficient winery with recycled materials.

Odette's winery is entirely energy self-sufficient, thanks to solar panels. "We have about 20,000 square feet of cave space, which doesn't require any heating or cooling," Conover said. "Inside the winery, there's no heating or air-conditioning. So in the winter when it gets a little chilly, the staff put on sweaters. And in the summer, they're lucky and they get to wear shorts and t-shirts to work." In fact, the only air-conditioned space in the winery is the winemaker office and laboratory, which are eco-friendly in a different way—they're constructed out of three recycled shipping containers.

The eco-friendly efforts extend beyond the ceiling. An 8,500-square-foot "green living roof" not only provides insulation value but, according to Conover, shows respect to the land. "The winery sort of vanishes into the natural flora and fauna of the site," he said.

Though building Odette to be eco-friendly was an obvious choice for PlumpJack's team, Conover acknowledges that it would have been more difficult achieving a Gold LEED certification with an existing winery. "To go back and to retrofit, to use recycled materials, to use solar panels, you'd basically have to tear the winery down," he said. But costly as it may be, Conover is adamant in his belief that green is the way to go. "It costs more to build Gold LEED certified, and it costs more to grow organically, but at the end of the day, it's the right thing to do."

And he foresees a great payoff, especially with the youngest generation of wine drinkers, a demographic he says the PlumpJack wineries have been attracting. "Millennial wine consumers are so interested in the different aspects of a winery, down to social consciousness and why you do what you do," he said. "Again, we think it's the right thing to do, but we're blessed that with the Millennials, what we think is the right thing to do, they seem to think is the right thing to do, as well."